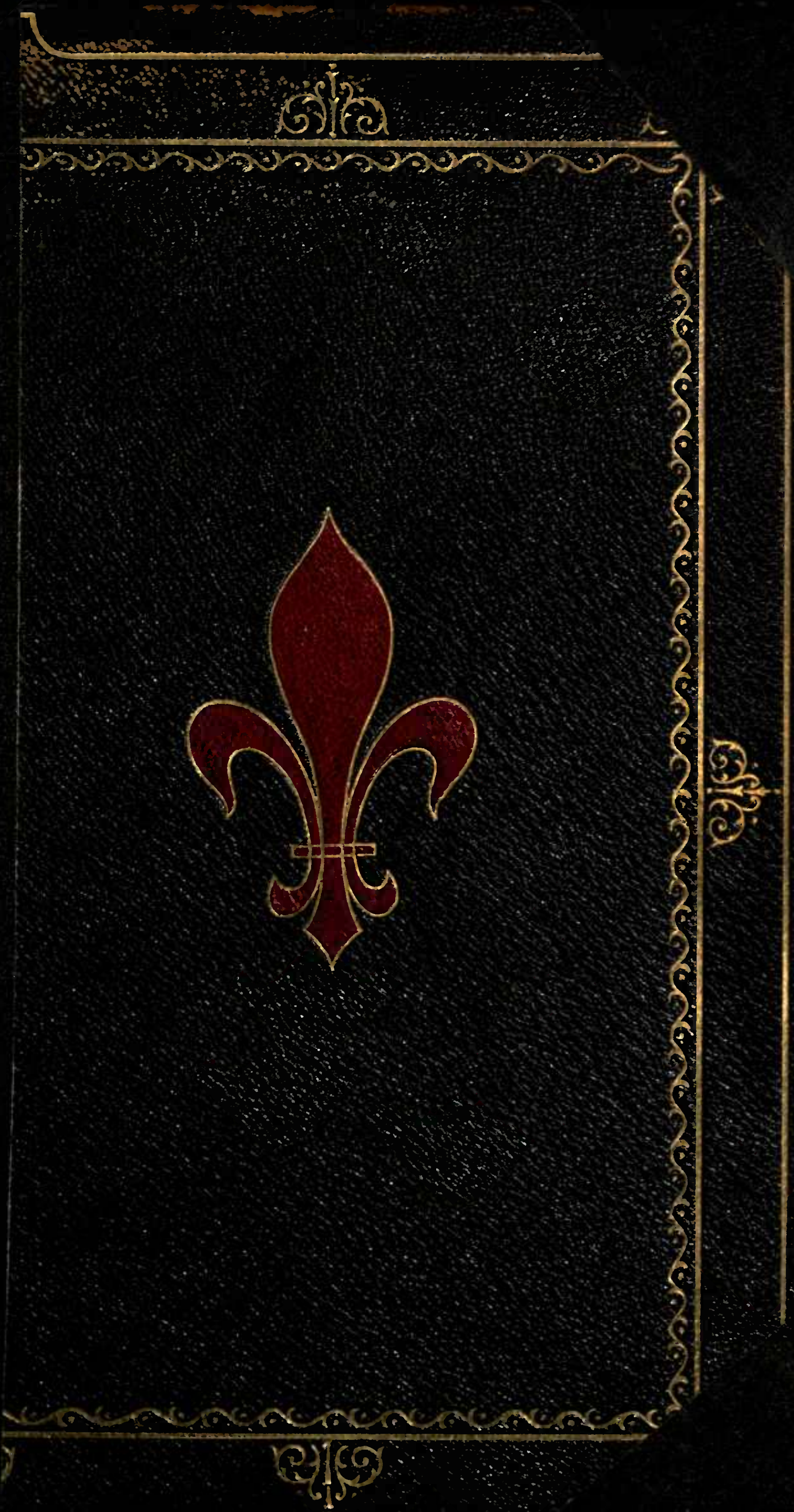

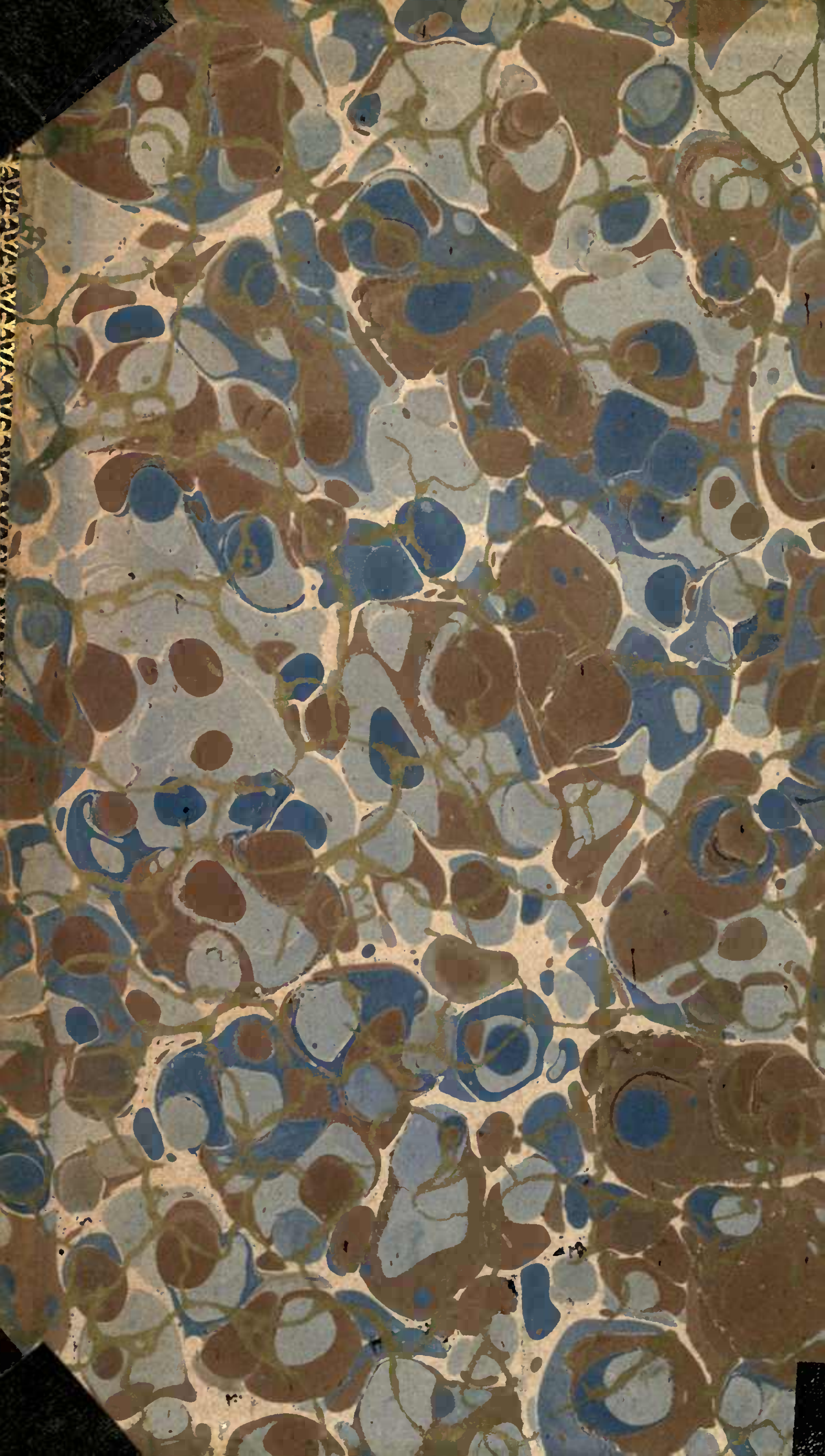

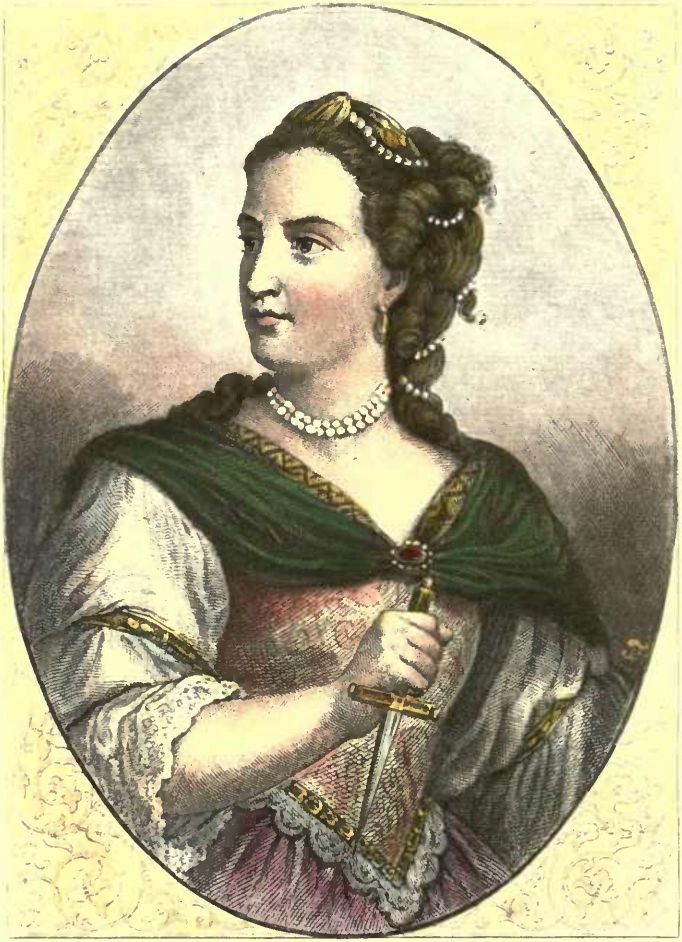

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Courtiers and Favourites of Royalty

ILLUSTRATED

Memoirs of Marmontel

In Two Volumes
Volume One

Paris
SOCIETÉ DES BIBLIOPHILES
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MERRILL AND BAKER

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MEMOIRS OF MARMONTEL

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MARMONTEL

In that eighteenth century so dissolute and so corrupt, Marmontel stands out as one of the frank faces, one of the good natures, that rest the spirit and comfort the heart. He is the son of a poor tailor of Bort, and by the nonentity of his social status seems destined to lead an obscure life. Happily he has a tender, intelligent, mentally distinguished mother. This excellent woman comprehends that her son has received from nature a felicitous bent for study; she does not shrink from the greatest sacrifices to aid in its development. She is at first seconded by an old priest, the Abbé Vaissière, who instils the first rudiments of Latin into the child; then she places her son in the Jesuits' college at Mauriac to finish his studies there.

How difficult now is the life of this youth! Without money, Marmontel is obliged, in order to pay for his daily bread, to give private lessons to his more fortunate young schoolmates; finally he succeeds in obtaining an appointment as professor of philosophy with the Bernardins of Toulouse. Meanwhile he receives the tonsure. The Jesuits, keen appreciators of his talent, already seek to enroll their brilliant pupil in their order. They might have succeeded in their design, but a trivial incident occurs to ruin the project.

One day, when he is essaying literary production, Marmontel resolves to send to the *Floral Games* an ode, *On the Invention of Gunpowder*, which, contrary to his expectations, obtains no success. Vexed at this rebuff, he writes to Voltaire, submitting his work to him, and complaining of "the horrible injustice of the Academy at Toulouse." The illustrious author, always kindly with beginners, consoles Marmontel, encourages him, sends him a copy of his own works, puts him in communication with Vauvenargues, and finally invites him to come to Paris, where he promises him the patronage of M. Orry, the controller-general.

The die is cast; Marmontel renounces the cassock and sets out for the capital. When he arrives and finds his protector fallen into disgrace, he esteems himself most fortunate to be accepted as tutor with one of the directors of the India Company.

He then writes *Dionysius the Tyrant,* his first tragedy, and it is played at the Comédie Française. This piece, applauded by the public, brings Marmontel a success of another kind, which he was not dreaming of; for the fair damsel Navarre, mistress of Marshal Saxe, falls in love with the author, carries him off, and goes to weave the warp and woof of perfect love with him in the depths of a village of Champagne. The caprice passes, for

"Souvent femme varie,
Bien fol est qui s'y fie;"

["Woman's fickle as the air,
Mad is he who anchors there;"]

Marmontel, deserted, returns to Paris, where he finds other consolations,—"the Clairon" first, then Mademoiselle Verrières, another mistress whom he ravishes from Marshal Saxe.

At this period Marmontel turns his efforts specially to the stage, where he obtains the representation of *Aristomenes, Cleopatra, Egyptus,* and *The Heracleids,* very mediocre pieces. Alone, despite Lebrun's celebrated epigram,—

"A la pièce de *Cléopâtre,*
Où fut l'aspic de Vaucanson,
Tant fut sifflé qu'à l'unisson
Sifflaient et parterre et théâtre;
Et le souffleur, oyant cela,
Croyant encore souffler, siffla,"—

["At *Cleopatra* it appears,
When played the asp of Vaucanson's,
Such hisses rose that both at once
Audience and stage were hissing fierce;
And even the prompter,[1] at the noise,
Prompted with hiss instead of voice,"]

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[1] The pun on *souffler*, to prompt, and *siffler*, to hiss, is untranslatable.

Cleopatra alone attains a success of curiosity, because the public come to wonder at the automatic asp, which, hissing with a loud sound, darts at the bosom of the Queen of Egypt.

Once seen, the young provincial of Bort is quickly invited to the great life of Paris. Of tall stature, distinguished face, open mind, gracious spirit, and agreeable manners, he knows how to push himself and create useful friendships. He never misses any of the dinners of artists and men of letters,—those famous dinners where are gathered Vauvenargues, Fontenelle, Raynal, Helvétius, Buffon, J. J. Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, etc. He has a place set for him at the "little suppers" of the Marquis de Duras, as at those of Mesdames du Deffand and de Tencin; and he is met at the little court of the Dauphin. In short, he is a lucky man.

Thanks to the support of Madame de Pompadour, he obtains from M. de Marigny the post of secretary to the Buildings Department; and soon after he secures appointment as director of the *Mercure*. He then devotes all his activity to enhancing the prosperity of this journal, one of our most ancient periodicals, with which it was desired to create a fund for conferring pensions on literary men of slender means. Marmontel succeeds in surrounding himself with scholars who are eager to concur in establishing solidly an organ which has become in a sort their common patrimony. Unluckily he commits the imprudence of reciting at Madame Geoffrin's a stinging satire in which the Duc d'Aumont, first gentleman of the King's bedchamber, is badly mishandled. On d'Aumont's complaint, his Majesty has Marmontel thrown into the Bastille and his functions on the *Mercure* withdrawn from him.

This very short captivity (it only lasts twelve days) does not leave very painful memories in Marmontel's mind; for the governor of the Bastille treats his prisoner with the greatest regard, and regales him with exquisite cheer,—a delicate attention to which the writer, *gourmand* and *gourmet*, is very sensible.

Restored to liberty, the latter resumes his literary occupations; he contributes to the *Encyclopædia* articles which, later collected in book form, revised and expanded, appear under the title *Elements of Literature.* At the same time he begins to write those *Contes Moraux*[1] with which he creates in France a new literary species, that neighbours at the same time romance and poetry. During forty years he charms his contemporaries by facile tales, full of a sprightly grace, where civic courage sometimes glows; for, a partisan of the ideas of tolerance in what concerns religion, the author constitutes himself their champion in *Belisarius* first, then in another work in two volumes, *The Incas.*

In 1762 the Institute receives him into the number of the Forty Immortals; and twenty years later, after d'Alembert's death, the French Academy elects him its perpetual secretary. Marmontel is now rich and of high consideration. He has no longer, it would seem, anything to wish for. Nevertheless he takes the notion one day that his household is empty, and that a woman's presence would render his fireside more cheerful. He marries; he espouses Mademoiselle de Montigny, niece of Morellet, that caustic abbé whom Voltaire called *Mords-les* [Bite-'Em]. This union is so happy that Marmontel does not understand how he can have remained so long a bachelor; but while he tastes with happiness the pure joys of the family, the great events which render the end of the eighteenth century unforgetable are hurrying forward more and more; and when the convocation of the States-General takes place, Marmontel stands for the department of the Eure, soliciting election as deputy. Beaten by his competitor Siéyès, he renounces the political career. Soon he is alarmed at the rapid progress of the Revolution, which deprives him of his chief income, and overturns in France a monarchy many centuries old. He quits Paris and takes refuge in a little village near Gaillon, where he buys a hut. There, surrounded by his wife and his three sons, he leads the modest existence of a philosopher. How far is he then from the beauteous countesses, the enticing marchionesses, of yore! What matters to him now the quarrel, in which he has taken so impassioned a part, of the Gluckists and Piccinists? Where are the Encyclopædists, the fine suppers, the opera, the friendly conversations with the witty minds of the age? All that is for him no more than a memory. Contrariwise, Marmontel draws up his *Memories of a Father for his Children*, and this task absorbs him utterly. In this work, his finest title to glory with posterity, he views for a second time his entire life; and at the same time that he captivates us by the thousand details of a past existence, by the charming pictures traced with his elegant pen, he again fulfills his old official function of historiographer of France when he speaks to us of events in which he has mingled or which have passed under his eyes.

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[1] Invariably and absurdly translated into English as *Moral Tales;* properly, tales of *manners* or society.

The revolutionary tempest calms itself little by little. But Marmontel, whom Bonaparte's first victories rejoice, sees only the beginning of the magnificent epic which is to overturn all Europe, and add an ineffaceable page to the history of France. Stricken with apoplexy, he dies amid his afflicted family the very day on which the eighteenth century closes.

LÉON VALLÉE.

INTRODUCTION

Jean François Marmontel, the author of the graphic and charming pictures of French Society under Louis XV., known as the "Contes," and of the "Memoirs," was born of obscure parents at Bort, a small town of Limosin, on the 11th of July, 1723, and lived until the last day of the eighteenth century; he thus passed the seventy-seven years of his life, during one of the most eventful and interesting periods of European political and literary history, in contact with the remarkable persons of the age. Educated at the Jesuit College at Mauriac, he proceeded thence to their Academies at Clermont and Toulouse, where he supported himself by instructing his less advanced companions.

His first literary production was an "Ode upon the Invention of Gunpowder," which he rendered at the Floral Games of the last-named city. Failing, however, to gain a prize, and experiencing in consequence the mortification which follows the non-appreciation of merit, he had the courage and good fortune to seek redress at the hands of his great countryman, Voltaire, by whom his worth was recognised.

Voltaire promised his assistance if the young poet should come to Paris; and, with fifty crowns in his pocket, he set out (1745) for that city, translating as he travelled Pope's "Rape of the Lock," which he sold for a hundred crowns, and which became his first publication the year after his arrival. During the next six years he occupied himself with the composition of a succession of tragedies—*Dionysius*, 1748; *Aristomenes*, 1749; *Cleopatra*, 1750; *Heraclides*, 1752; *Egyptus*, 1753. Upon the stage they were very successful—though they would probably nowadays be considered prolix; but, what is more, they advanced the interests of the poet by making him free of the best literary and fashionable social circles.

Associated with Diderot and d'Alembert, he wrote a series of articles for the great "Encyclopædia," evincing considerable critical power and insight, under the title of "Elements of Literature," amongst the higher French classics. This success, however, was not unalloyed with adversity, and his "Memoirs" contain particulars of the poverty and misery which at this time were his lot, from which even his prize poem upon the "Glory of the King" (Louis XV.), after the victory of Fontenoy, nothwithstanding that it was sold under the auspices of Voltaire, did not rescue him. Some comic operas, the two best of which are probably *Sylvain* and *Zemire et Azore*, were of greater service to him. In 1753 he won the patronage of Madame Pompadour, and by her favour was appointed clerk of public buildings, and was also employed by her to touch up dull poems, old plays, dedications, &c. Soon afterwards he was appointed to the post of manager of the official journal, the *Mercury*, in which he had already commenced a series of attractive and elegant tales. These are the "Contes Moraux" alluded to above, upon which Marmontel's literary reputation mainly, according to some critics, rests. Their merit lies partly in their style, which in delicate finish frequently rivals that of his master, Voltaire, but mainly in their pictures of high life at that very interesting epoch. They were published in their entirety in 1761. By certain critical heresies which raised a literary storm, and for awhile closed the doors of the Academy against him, he increased his reputation and name, and on the other hand opened the gates of the Bastille for his own reception on account of a parody of which he was not guilty, but sufficiently famous to bear the brunt. He had the manliness not to betray the author, although the imprisonment cost him his privilege of the *Mercury*. In 1763 he was elected to the Academy, and set about the realisation of the ambition of which he had already evinced the possession—viz., the production and establishment of a new literary style. This found its exponent in "Belisarius," which, while it enormously increased his reputation—although a dull prose epic romance—did not accomplish his object; being now remarkable only on account of a chapter upon religious toleration which incurred the censure of the Sorbonne and of the Archbishops of Paris. Marmontel, however, retorted in "The Incas" by tracing the cruelties in Spanish America to the religious fanaticism of the invaders. Marmontel, having been appointed historiographer of France, secretary to the Academy, 1783, and professor of history at the Lycée, 1786, produced a "History of the Regency"; while his most successful and solid work is his "Elements of Literature," in 6 vols. 8vo, in which his articles on Poetry and Literature, written for the "Encyclopædia," are included.

His most useful and valuable work, if not the greatest, is undoubtedly his "Memoirs." They contain a picturesque review of his whole life, a literary history of two important reigns, a great gallery of portraits extending from the venerable Massillon (whom more than half-a-century previously he had seen at Clermont) to the fiery Mirabeau, amidst the tempestuous first years of the Revolution. He became a member of the Electoral Assembly of Paris in 1789, but his moderation being suspected to be Royalism, he was compelled, in 1792, to retire into concealment and poverty, at first to Evreux, and soon after to a cottage near Gaillon, in l'Eure, where he composed his "Memoirs"; and there, after a short stay in Paris when elected in 1797 to the Conseil des Anciens, he died upon the last day of the year 1799.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Few works have attracted a greater share of general attention than that of which a translation is now offered to the public. The interesting nature of the narrative, the distinguished characters to which it relates, the exquisite skill and delicacy with which their portraits are drawn, combine to give it an interest superior to that inspired by almost any other work of the same kind. And there is, perhaps, no work which gives so intimate a view of literary and fashionable society as they existed in a nation by whom its pleasures were valued and cultivated in a peculiar degree. But as French manners, particularly those of the literary and fashionable circles, in which our author spent most of his life, differ very much from those prevalent in this country, it may be proper to premise a short view of some of these peculiarities. The mere English reader may thus be enabled to understand some passages which might otherwise have appeared to him unaccountable.

In no city, perhaps, was there ever such a confluence of immense fortunes, such a constant assemblage of all that was opulent and splendid, as at Paris. To it crowded all the considerable landed proprietors of a country which, in point of extent and cultivation united, was not equalled by any other in Europe. Nor did men of fortune, as is usual in this country, resort to the metropolis only to spend a few of the winter months there; they made it, in general, their constant residence the whole year round. The amusements pursued by its nobles were almost confined to those which the Court and city afforded, to the constant pursuit of which they entirely devoted themselves. Nor were there many avocations of public business to divert them from this career. Hence proceeded an eager pursuit of everything in the form of pleasure; hence an importance attached to whatever was connected with this object, greater than elsewhere to business of the most serious concern. Conversation, with this view, was reduced to a science, a proficiency in which formed one of the grand roads to promotion. The drama, poetry of all kinds, philosophy even, were called in to vary the scene of amusement. More ignoble pleasures were also resorted to and pursued with great excess; hence a licentiousness of manners, which exceeded, perhaps, that of any other European society. Of this there will appear too evident traces in the course of these Memoirs: nor does the author himself wholly escape the contagion. It does not appear, however, that his sense of right has ever been obliterated; in relating his errors, he fails not to acknowledge them as such, and seems to wish that they should serve as a warning to his readers.

In a society where pleasure was thus the reigning object, it was natural that the female sex should possess a high degree of influence. They occupied, in fact, a more prominent part in the theatre of life than is usually assigned to them in this country. They were the arbiters, not of public amusements only, but of literature and the arts; of celebrity, in short, of every kind. In consequence of this independence and consideration, they acquired, perhaps, even a more than ordinary share of those accomplishments and those powers of pleasing which are peculiar to their sex. There are other respects, however, in which, as is well known, their character was not improved by these circumstances. Perhaps this may have been somewhat exaggerated; but it is certain that from the dissolute character of the Sovereign[1] and the higher orders, the most worthless of the sex became often the channel through which Court favour was distributed. The paying court to them was formed, as it were, into a trade, and considered as a regular mode by which a man might advance himself in the world—with which, I am sorry to observe, Marmontel himself does not appear to be altogether unacquainted.

Although married ladies enjoyed more freedom than in this country, before marriage they were kept under much greater restraint. In forming that connection, it was expected that they should be entirely at the disposal of their parents or male relations. On this occasion a portion *(dot)* was considered as indispensable.

In considering the society of men of letters, the first circumstance which strikes us is the singular estimation in which that character was held in the

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[1] Louis XV.

Parisian circles. In the present, and other similar Memoirs, we see them mixing familiarly with persons of the highest rank, with ministers and men in power. A late French writer has observed that the leading philosophers of the day possessed a degree of consideration in society not inferior to that of the first nobility. The different academies, particularly that entitled the French Academy, gave to this class of men not only a badge of distinction, but a sort of professional establishment, which it does not possess in any other country.

The French Academy was founded in 1635, by Cardinal Richelieu, avowedly for the purpose of improving the French language. Its general object comprehended all subjects of grammar, poetry and eloquence. The number of members was forty, who were elected by the Academy; but the King's sanction was necessary to confirm their choice. They were understood to be all completely on a level. The first nobility solicited admission; but they received it only under the character of literary men. The Academy had a chancellor and a director, who were chosen out of its own members every three months; it had also a secretary, whose office was for life. It met thrice a week the whole year round, on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The only public meetings were those which took place at the reception of a new member, who was expected to pronounce a speech on the occasion, called his *discours de reception;* and an annual meeting, at which the Academy distributed prizes for eloquence and poetry, each consisting of a gold medal.

The Academy of Sciences was founded in 1666 by Colbert, under the auspices of Louis XIV. It embraced, originally, not only physics and mathematics, but also history and the fine arts. But the two latter branches were afterwards suppressed, it being represented that the first, as including Church history, might lead it upon dangerous ground; and that the latter interfered with the business of the French Academy. This assembly consisted of upwards of a hundred members, and met twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Previous to the French Revolution it had published 108 volumes.

The Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres was founded also under the ministry of Colbert. Its original object was to commemorate the glory of France, and particularly that of Louis XIV., by historical medals, devices and inscriptions. Colbert, during his lifetime, constantly attended its meetings, and often took the members out with him to his country-house at Sceaux. This academy, however, did not gain any permanent establishment till 1610. Its number was then fixed at forty, and its meetings appointed to take place twice a week, on Tuesdays and on Fridays. Before its extinction it had produced forty-three volumes.

As amusement was the chief motive which prompted this gay and splendid society to become the patrons of literature, so those branches which had that for their object were likely to experience the most ample share of patronage. The drama seems to have been the grand road to fame and fortune. Most writers who aimed at distinction in the path of polite literature, whatever their subsequent pursuits may have been, made their first appearance in the theatre. Next in attraction were what were called *vers de société*—songs, epigrams, complimentary verses—anything which was formed for amusing a company. The path of the French Academy appears frequently to have been opened by excellence in this light department. Even philosophy found it necessary to lay aside its austerity and assume an easy and smiling aspect. The votaries of the abstract sciences too, studied, after the example of Fontenelle, to strip them of their thorns, and to render them engaging to fair and fashionable students.

It must not be concealed, however, that literature, in consequence of mixing thus intimately with the splendid and fashionable circles, was considerably tainted with the reigning licentiousness. Another circumstance, still more to be regretted, is the hostility which it exhibited towards the reigning system of religious belief. For this, indeed, some apology may be found in the circumstances of the time. A system which demanded the sacrifice of reason to authority, which prohibited all free discussion, and even, as will appear in these Memoirs, claimed still the right of propagating its tenets by the sword, could hardly be compatible with a spirit of philosophical enquiry. It appears, from the writings of Fontenelle, that from the first dawn of this spirit, it was exposed to ecclesiastical persecution. Mutual hostilities continued to widen the breach. Protestantism being little known or respected in France, attracted few of the deserters from the ruling faith; men, in wishing to throw off superstition, went generally into the opposite extreme of scepticism. The thinking world was thus invariably divided into two parties—the *philosophes* and the *dévots*. The former, during the period of our author's narrative, had gained a complete ascendency in the literary circles, and even in the Academy. Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot, Helvetius, are the well-known heads of this party; and to them Marmontel was attached, both by literary habits and by private friendship. But, though it may be difficult to absolve him of a culpable degree of indifference upon the subject, yet it does not appear that his opinions were inimical to religion in general. On the contrary, they appear to have preserved a very just medium between the two extremes; and if he is found engaged in a contest with the reigning schools of theology, it is only on points on which the latter are evidently in the wrong.

It does not appear, also, that our author had adopted the anti-monarchical principles which, from causes somewhat similar, were prevalent in the same circles. Without opposing the reforms of which the Government stood doubtless in need, he preserves his loyalty unimpeachable, and his political sentiments seem, on the whole, very just and moderate.

I reserve till the conclusion the few particulars which I have been able to learn respecting our author in addition to those contained in his own narrative. I shall here only notice that circumstance in his character which peculiarly fitted him for transmitting to us a lively picture of the manners of his age. This circumstance is—its flexibility. We do not see a mind, like that of Rousseau, living within itself and communicating its own dark hue to the objects around it. His, on the contrary, resigns itself readily to the influence of every passion which circumstances inspire; like a mirror, it reflects, unchanged, all the various scenes through which he passes. This flexibility, indeed, bordering on weakness, is not in itself very laudable; but it gives a peculiar value to a work like the present, where the external scenes and characters are so various and interesting.

Those leading characters in French literature to whom we have above alluded will, it is presumed, be sufficiently familiar to the English reader; but a few Notes are added with the view of throwing light upon such as may be less generally known, as well as upon other circumstances which may be necessary for making the narrative completely understood.

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L

MEMOIRS

OF

MARMONTEL

BOOK I

It is for my children, and in compliance with the wishes of their mother, that I now write the history of my life. If any one else shall cast his eye over it, he must pardon details, that to him may appear tedious, but which will be interesting to those for whom they were intended. My children stand in need of those lessons which a long life, and the variety of situations through which I have passed, have afforded to me. I wish them to learn from my story never to despair of their own powers, but also never to be too confident; to dread the dangers which lurk under prosperity, and to bear with firmness the shocks of adversity.

I have had one advantage over them—that of being born in a place where inequality of situation and fortune was scarcely felt. It was at Bort, a small village in Limosin. A little property, joined with some industry at home, or a small trade with the neighbouring districts, furnished the means of subsistence to almost all its inhabitants. Every one employed himself usefully, and was his own master. Mediocrity held the place of wealth. Thus the elevation, frankness, and dignity of their character were not debased by any kind of humiliation; and if any symptoms of foolish pride appeared, nowhere could it be worse received, or sooner corrected. During my childhood, therefore, though born in obscurity, I may be said to have known only my equals; thence arose, perhaps, a certain inflexibility which has adhered to my character, and which reason and age have never sufficiently softened.

Bort, situated on the Dordogne, between Auvergne and Limosin, presents to the traveller, at first, a terrifying aspect. From afar, on the top of the mountain, he sees it at the bottom of a precipice, in danger of being overwhelmed by torrents, or crushed by a chain of volcanic rocks, some fixed like towers upon the height which commands the village; others half worn away at their base, and already hanging over. But Bort assumes a smiling aspect when these fears are dissipated and the eye wanders over the valley. Above the village, a verdant isle, embraced by the river and animated by the motion and sound of a mill, contains a grove peopled with birds. On the two banks of the river, orchards, meadows, and fields, cultivated by a laborious people, compose a varied picture. Beneath the village, the valley spreads on one side into a vast meadow, watered by clear springs; on the other, into fields crowned by a circuit of hills, which with their gentle slopes form an agreeable contrast to the wildness of the opposite rocks. Farther on this circuit is broken by a torrent from the mountains, which rolls and dashes amid forests, rocks and precipices, till it falls into the Dordogne by a cataract, which, whether we consider the quantity of water, or the height of its fall, is one of the finest on the continent, and which, to acquire celebrity, wants only more numerous spectators.

At a small distance from this cataract, lies that little farm of St. Thomas, where I used to read Virgil beneath the shade of the flowery trees that surrounded our bee-hives, and where I made such delicious repasts of their honey. On the other side of the village, and on the declivity above the mill, is that orchard where, on the fine festival days, my father took me to gather grapes from the vine which he himself had planted, or cherries, plums, and apples, from the trees which he had grafted.

But that which, to me, forms the charm of my native abode, is the impression which I retain of the first sentiments with which my soul was, as it were, imbued and penetrated, by the inexpressible tenderness with which my family regarded me. If there is anything good in my character, it is owing, I believe, to these sweet emotions, to this habitual happiness of loving and being beloved. Ah! when heaven gives us good parents, how precious is the gift.

I was much indebted, also, to a certain pleasing gentleness of manners which prevailed then in my native place, and there must have been a peculiar attraction in the mild and simple life which it afforded, since nothing was more rare than to see Bort quitted by those who were born in it. The youths were educated in the neighbouring colleges, and the little colony distinguished itself; but they returned to their village, as a swarm of bees to the hive, after having collected the spoil.

I had learned to read in a little convent of nuns, who were good friends of my mother. It was their practice to educate only girls; but they made an exception to this rule in my favour. A lady of a good family, and who had long lived retired in this convent, was so kind as to take me under her charge. I may well cherish her memory, and that of the nuns, for they loved me as their child.

From this school I passed to that kept by a clergyman in the village, who, through mere inclination, and without any reward, had devoted himself to the education of children. This ecclesiastic, the son of a shoemaker, was the best man in the world. He was a true model of filial piety. I think I still see the look of complacency and mutual attention with which this old man and his son regarded each other, the one never forgetting the dignity of the priesthood, nor the other the sanctity of the paternal character. The Abbé Vaissiere (for this was his name), after having fulfilled his ecclesiastical functions, divided the rest of his time between reading and the lessons he gave us. A short walk in fine weather, and sometimes, by way of exercise, a game at mall in the meadow, were his only amusements. He was serious, severe, and of a commanding appearance. His whole society consisted of two friends, men who were much respected in our village. They lived together in the most tranquil intimacy, meeting every day, and every day finding each other the same. The pleasure of their intercourse never experienced the least diminution, and, to complete their happiness, all the three died nearly about the same time. Seldom have I seen an instance of such a mild and steady equality continued through the whole course of life.

At this school I had a companion, who, from infancy, was an object of my emulation. His sedate and prudent air, his application to study, the care he took of his books, in which I never discovered a stain, his fair hair always well combed, his dress always neat though simple, and his linen always clean, afforded an example that had a great influence on me. It is seldom that one child inspires another with an esteem such as I felt for him. He was called Durant. His father, a labourer in a neighbouring village, was acquainted with mine. I used to walk with the son, to see him in his village. How well were we received by this good grey-haired old man! How excellent was the cream, the milk, the brown bread he gave us! and what happy omens did he delight to draw, from the respect I showed for his old age. Why cannot I go and strew flowers on his tomb! there, surely, he rests in peace; for in his lifetime he did nothing but good. Twenty years after, his son and I met at Paris, in very different walks ot life; but I recognised the same correctness and propriety which had characterised him at school; and it gave me no small satisfaction to stand godfather to one of his children.

I now return to my early years. My progress in Latin was interrupted by a singular accident. I had a great desire to learn, but Nature had denied me the gift of memory. I had enough to retain the meaning of what I read, but the words left no trace in my brain, and the task of fixing them in it, was like that of writing on moving sand. I endeavoured, by the most intense application, to supply the weakness of my retentive powers; this labour was beyond the strength of my age; it affected my nerves. I became like a somnambulist; at night, when fast asleep, I sat up in bed, and, with eyes half open, repeated aloud the lessons I had learned. "You see," said my father to my mother, "he will certainly go mad, if you do not make him give up this wretched Latin." The study was suspended; but in eight or ten months I resumed it, and at the end of my eleventh year, my master, having judged me fit to enter the fourth class, my father was prevailed upon, though with difficulty, to take me himself to the college of Mauriac, which was the nearest to Bort.

I must justify this reluctance of my father, which was nothing more than became a prudent man. I was the eldest of a great number of children; my father, who, though a little rigid, yet under an air of roughness and severity possessed the most sterling worth, loved his wife to distraction. He had every reason, indeed, to do so, for there could not be a woman more respectable, more interesting, more amiable in her whole conduct, than was my affectionate mother. I never could conceive how, with the simple education of our little convent at Bort, she had acquired a mind so elegantly cultivated, such elevation of soul, and particularly such a correct, delicate and refined sense of propriety in language and style, which seemed in her to be the pure instinct of taste. Our worthy Bishop of Limoges, the virtuous Coetlosquet, often, when we met at Paris, spoke to me with the most tender interest of the letters which my mother had written, recommending me to his care.

My father felt for her as much veneration as love. He reproached her only with an excessive fondness for me, but for this weakness there was an excuse. Of all her children, she had nursed me alone; her precarious health never again allowed her to perform this pleasing duty. Her mother was no less fond of me. I think I still see the good little old woman; what a charming character! what sweet and smiling gaiety! As manager of the family, she presided over the household affairs, and set us all an example of filial piety; for she, too, had a mother, and the mother of her husband, of whom she took the greatest care. I go a little far back when I speak of my great grandmothers; but I remember well, seeing them still alive at the age of eighty, drinking a small glass of wine at the fireside, and reminding each other of old times, about which they told us wonderful stories.

The family contained, also, three sisters of my grandmother, and the sister of my mother, the aunt who still survives; amid these women, and a swarm of children, my father was the only man: a very small income supported them all. Order, good management, industry, a little trade, and above all, frugality, kept us in easy circumstances. The little garden produced vegetables almost sufficient for the supply of the house; the orchard supplied fruit; and our quinces, our apples, our pears, preserved with the honey of our bees, made, during winter, delicious breakfasts for the children and for the good old women. The wool of a few sheep which pastured at St. Thomas, clothed sometimes the women, and sometimes the children; my aunts spun it; they spun also flax which grew in our field, and thus supplied us with linen. The evenings in which, by the light of a lamp fed with the oil of our nut trees, the young people of the neighbourhood came to assist us in dressing this flax, might have furnished the subject of a charming picture. The crop of corn yielded by the little farm secured our subsistence; the bees produced wax and honey, which, under the careful management of one of my aunts, produced a revenue without much cost; the oil extracted from our nuts while yet fresh, had a relish, an odour, which we preferred to the taste and perfume of that of the olive. Our buckwheat cakes, moistened, piping hot, with the good butter of Mont d'Or, made the nicest feast for us. I know not what food could have appeared to us better than our turnips and our chesnuts; and in winter evenings, when these fine cheesnuts were roasting round the fire, or when we heard the water boiling in the pot where these sweet and savoury turnips were cooking, our hearts beat with delight. I remember also the perfume exhaled from a fine quince roasted under the ashes, and the pleasure our grandmother took in dividing it among us. That most temperate of women made us all gluttons. Thus, in a household where nothing was lost, such little articles, when put together, kept up a sort of plenty, and made a small expense sufficient for supplying our wants. There was so much decayed wood in the neighbouring forests, that it bore scarcely any value; my father was allowed to supply himself with fuel from it. Excellent mountain butter, and the most delicate cheeses were common and cheap; wine was not dear, and my father himself used it temperately.

Yet, after all, the expense of the house came nearly up to our resources; and the foresight of my father overrated the probable expense of my education at college; besides, he looked upon the time spent in study as very ill employed; Latin, he said, only made people idle. Perhaps, also, he had some presentiment of the misfortune we were to suffer, in seeing him snatched from us by a premature death, and by making me early embrace an employment, whose profit was less distant and uncertain, he hoped to leave in me a second father to his children. Nevertheless, overcome by the importunities of my mother, who was passionately desirous that at least her eldest son should study, he agreed to take me to the college of Mauriac.[1]

Overwhelmed, then, with caresses, bathed in sweet tears, and loaded with blessings, I set out with my father. He carried me behind him, and my heart beat with joy; but it beat with fear when my father said: "They have promised, my son, that you shall be received into the fourth class—if you are not, I bring you back, and there will be an end of the matter." Imagine the tremor with which I appeared before the master who was to decide my fate. Happily, he was the good Father Malosse, to whom I owe so much gratitude. His look, the sound of his voice, and the expression of his countenance bore so natural and sensible a character of benevolence that his first address announced a friend to the stranger who accosted him. Having received us in a manner the most gracefully courteous, he invited my father to return and learn the success of the examination I was to undergo; and, seeing me still very timid, he began by encouraging me; then, by way of trial, he gave me a theme; it was full of difficulties which I could not solve. I did it very ill, so that after reading it he said: "My child, you are very far from being qualified to enter into this class; you will even find it difficult to be received into the fifth." I burst into tears. "I am undone," said I; "my father has no wish that I should continue my studies. He brings me here only out of complaisance to my mother; and he told me on the road that if I were not received into the fourth class he would carry me home with him; that would be a great loss to me and a sad grief to my mother. Ah! for pity's sake receive me. I promise, Father, to study so hard that you will soon have cause to be satisfied." The master was so much affected by my tears and by my good will, that he received me, and bade my father not be uneasy, for he was sure I would do well.

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[1] See Note (1) at the end of the volume.

According to the custom of the college, I and five other scholars lodged with an honest tradesman in the city; and my father, a good deal grieved at setting out without me, left my bundle of clothes and provision for a week. This provision consisted of a large loaf of rye bread, a small cheese, a morsel of bacon, and two or three pounds of beef; my mother had added a dozen apples. Such, indeed, was the weekly provision made by those scholars in our college who were best maintained. The landlady dressed our victuals, and for her trouble, her fire, her lamp, her beds, her lodgings, and even the vegetables of her little garden, which she put into the pot, each of us gave her two shillings a month; so that, reckoning everything except clothes, I might cost my father four or five guineas per annum. It was much for him, and I longed greatly to save him this expense.

The day after my arrival, as I went to my class in the morning, I saw the master at his window making me a sign with his finger to come to him. "My child," said he, "you stand in need of private instruction, and of much study, to come up to your schoolfellows. We must begin with the elements. Come here every morn ing half-an-hour before the class meets, and repeat to me the rules you have learned; I will explain them to you, and point out their use." On this day I wept again, but they were tears of gratitude. Thanking him for his kindness, I besought him to add to it by sparing me, for some time, the mortification of hearing my exercises read aloud in the class. He promised to do so, and I went to my studies.

I cannot express the tender interest with which he took upon himself the care of instructing me, or the agreeable manner in which he contrived to communicate his lessons. At the very name of my mother, whom I sometimes mentioned to him, he seemed to breathe her very soul; and when I delivered to him the letters in which maternal affection expressed its gratitude, tears flowed from his eyes.

From the month of October, in which I began my studies, till the Easter holidays I denied myself every kind of amusement and pastime; but having, at the end of this half-year, become familiar with all my rules, able to apply them always correctly, and thus disentangled, as it were, from the thorns of syntax, I went on with more freedom. I was ever after one of the best scholars in the class; perhaps, also, I was the happiest; for my task was agreeable to me, and when I was pretty secure of doing it tolerably well, it became only a pleasure. I began to turn my attention to the selection and proper use of words, and even aimed at some degree of elegance in the construction of sentences. This employment, which cannot be carried on without analyzing our ideas, strengthened my memory. I perceived that a word fixed itself in my mind in consequence of the idea attached to it; and reflection soon showed me that the study of languages involved also the study of the art of discriminating the shades of thought, of separating it into its constituent parts, of forming it into a regular texture, and of marking with precision its character and relations. With every word, a new idea is introduced and unfolded in the youthful mind; so that the first classes form a course of elementary philosophy, much richer, more extensive, and more truly useful than those are aware of, who complain that in colleges nothing is taught but Latin.

This exercise of the mind in the study of languages was pointed out to me by Father Bourges, an old man whom my master had recommended to me. Few men understood good Latin better than this old Jesuit. Having undertaken to continue and complete the poetical Latin dictionary which Father Vanniere had begun, he humbly petitioned to be at the same time allowed to teach the fifth class of this little school in the mountains of Auvergne. He took a liking to me, and asked me to call upon him in the morning of holidays. I, as you may suppose, failed not to do so; and he was kind enough to spend sometimes whole hours in instructing me. Alas! the only return I could make was to attend him at mass; yet this he looked upon as a favour, and for the following reason.

This good old man was greatly troubled, because at prayers he could not, without the most painful exertion, keep his mind from wandering. While saying mass, especially, every word that he uttered was accompanied with a new effort to fix his thought; so that by the time he came to the words of the sacrifice, drops of sweat fell from his bald and prostrate forehead. I saw his whole body trembling with reverence and terror, as if he had seen the canopy of heaven open over the altar, and the living God descending. Never was faith more profound and animated; so that after the performance of this sacred duty he was reduced almost to a state of complete exhaustion.

He found relief from this fatigue in the pleasure of instructing me, and in that with which I received his lessons. He it was who laid open to me the rich and inexhaustible beauties of ancient literature, and who excited in me that thirst for it, which sixty years of study have not been able to satisfy. Thus I found myself, in this obscure school, placed under the tuition of one of the most learned men, perhaps, in the world; but I did not long enjoy this advantage; Father Bourges was translated, and six years after, I met him in a monastery at Toulouse, infirm, and almost wholly abandoned. This neglect of their old men was a most odious part of the institutions and customs of the Jesuits. However laborious a man was, however long he had been useful, the moment he ceased to be so, he was thrown away like refuse; a cruelty as senseless as it was inhuman among beings who were themselves growing old, and each of whom knew that he, in his turn, would experience a similar neglect.

The distinguishing character of our college was a discipline which the scholars exercised over each other. Boys of different classes lodged in the same room, and the authority which was naturally acquired by those who were superior to the rest in age and talent, established order and regularity in their studies and behaviour. The child who at a distance from his family seemed, when out of the class, to be left wholly to himself, found among his companions superintendents and censors. They studied all together round the same table; thus a circle of witnesses, placed under each other's eyes, mutually enforced silence and attention. The idle boy found it not at all amusing to sit fixed in motionless silence, and soon grew weary of his idleness. The dull boy, if diligent, was pitied, assisted, and encouraged; he was esteemed, if not for his ability, yet for his good will; but no indulgence nor pity was shown to the incurable sluggard; and when a whole room became infected with this vice, it fell into a kind of disgrace and was despised by the whole college; parents were warned not to put their children into it.

It was, therefore, greatly to the interest of our landlords to have only studious boys in their house. I have seen them expelled solely on account of idleness and disorderly behaviour. Thus there was scarcely one of these groups in which idleness was tolerated; nor were amusement and play ever indulged in till after study was over.

One custom, which I never saw established in any other college, redoubled, towards the end of the year, the ardour of our studies. Before rising from one class to another, we underwent a strict examination, and one of the tasks to be performed on this occasion was getting by heart a quantity of Latin. This, according to the class, consisted of poetry, out of Phædrus, Ovid, Virgil and Horace; or of prose from Cicero, Livy, Quintus Curtius and Sallust; the whole forming a very considerable mass of study. We began long before the appointed time; and, not to encroach on our usual studies, we laboured at this task from daybreak till the hour of our morning lesson. It was performed in the fields, through which, divided into groups, with books in our hands, we went humming like swarms of bees. Nothing is more difficult for a boy than to tear himself from his morning's sleep; but the most active of each band forcibly roused such as were lazily inclined. I have often, while yet almost asleep, felt myself dragged out of bed. To the exercise of my memory in these tasks I am indebted for any additional degree of pliancy and facility which I may have since experienced in the use of that faculty.

Our college discipline was no less distinguished by a spirit of order and economy than by studious habits. The youngest, and those newly come, were taught by the elder boys to take care of their clothes and linen, to keep their books clean, and to be saving of their provisions. All the bits of pork, beef or mutton that were put into the pot were strung together like a chaplet of beads; and if any debate or difficulty arose in consequence of this mixture, the landlady decided it. When, on certain holidays, our friends sent us any delicacy, the treat was common, and those who received nothing partook equally with the rest. I recollect with pleasure the delicate attention with which the more fortunate of our number sought to conceal from the others this afflicting inequality. Our landlady informed us when any of these presents arrived; but she was forbidden to name the boy for whom it was destined, who himself would have blushed to boast of his good fortune. My mother, on being told of this piece of discretion, greatly admired it.

Our play hours were spent in games after the ancient fashion; in winter we went upon the ice, in the midst of snow; while, in summer, regardless of the burning sun, we made long excursions into the fields. Our most frequent exercises were running, wrestling, boxing, quoits, throwing with the sling, and swimming. In hot weather we went to bathe at more than a league's distance from the town; the little boys searched for cray-fish in the brooks; the elder fished for eels and trout in the rivers, or caught quails in nets after harvest. These last were our highest pleasures, and when we returned from a long ramble, woe to the fields in which there were any green peas remaining. Not one of us would have been guilty of stealing a pin; but, in our system of morality, a maxim had been established, that nothing eatable could constitute a theft. I abstained as much as possible from this species of pillage; but though I did not actually steal the peas, I certainly was a party; first, in furnishing my contingent of bacon to season them, and, lastly, in eating them along with the more active accomplices. To do like the rest appeared to me a duty, from which my situation forbade me to deviate;

and I endeavoured to compromise the affair with my confessor, by giving my share of the booty in alms.

Meanwhile, I saw in a class above mine a scholar whose prudence and virtue continued unalterable; and I was sensible that his was the example which I ought to follow; but while I viewed him with emulation, I did not dare to consider myself as having a title to become equally distinguished. Amalvy had so many claims to respect at college, and was there so completely without an equal, that the sort of distance which was left between us seemed just and natural. In this extraordinary young man all the endowments of the mind and heart seemed to have united, in order to render him completely accomplished. Nature had given that external appearance which one would think should always be bestowed on merit alone. He was tall, his figure was noble and elegant, his deportment sedate, his air serious, but serene. I saw him always come to college attended by some of his class-fellows, who were proud of being in his company. He associated with them, but without becoming familiar, and he never divested himself of that dignity which arose from the habit of holding the first place among his equals. The cross,[1] the ensign of this superiority, was never taken from his buttonhole; no one dared attempt carrying it off. I admired, I took pleasure in seeing him, and yet every time that I saw him I went away dissatisfied with myself. Not but that, by dint of hard labour from the time of entering the third class, I had distinguished myself sufficiently; but I had two or three rivals; Amalvy had none. My compositions did not meet with that uniform success which astonished us in his; still less had I that ready and correct memory with which Amalvy was endowed. My only comfort was, he was older than I; and I hoped to equal him by the time I arrived at his age. After analyzing as minutely as possible what then passed in my mind, I can truly say that into this feeling of emulation the malignant sentiment of envy never insinuated itself. I grieved not that the world should contain one Amalvy; my prayer to heaven would have been that there should be two, and that I should be the second.

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[1] Worn by those who were at the head of each class.

This college had an advantage still more precious than emulation: a religious spirit was carefully maintained in it. We were obliged to go every month to confession; and this practice formed a most salutary preservative of the youthful character. The shame which attended this humble acknowledgment of our most secret faults, saved us, perhaps, from the commission of a greater number more than the most sacred motives would have done.

Thus, at Mauriac, from between the age of eleven and twelve, I went on with my Latin; and in rhetoric, which I also studied, I kept almost constantly at the head of the class. My worthy mother was transported by the intelligence. When my dimity waistcoats were returned, the first thing she did was to see if the silver chain, by which the cross hung, had darkened my buttonhole; and when she discovered this mark of my triumph all the mothers in the neighbourhood were informed of her joy; our worthy nuns returned thanks to heaven; the countenance of my dear Abbé Vaissiere shone with glory. This happiness, which I made my mother enjoy, forms still the most pleasing of my recollections; but, while I informed her of my success, I was careful to conceal some unpleasant occurrences, which, if the least complaint had escaped me, would have sensibly afflicted her. These were, my quarrel in the third class with Father Bis, head master of the school, about the Auvergne dance; and the danger which I incurred of being whipt, in the second Latin class, and also in the rhetoric—once for having dictated to another boy a good theme, and, another time, for having gone to see the workmanship of a clock. Luckily, I extricated myself from all these perils, not only without accident, but even with some degree of honour.

Everyone knows the malignity with which favourites are regarded at the court of kings ; it is the same at school. The particular attention which the master in the fourth class had paid me, and my assiduity in going to him every morning, had caused me to be viewed with a jealous and suspicious eye. From that time, therefore, I made a point of proving myself a better and more faithful comrade than any of those who accused and distrusted me. When I came to be frequently at the head of my class, a situation to which the unpleasant office of censor was attached, I resolved to exercise it more mildly than usual. During the half-hour, when the master went away and left me to preside, I began by allowing my companions a moderate degree of liberty; they talked, they laughed, they amused themselves without much noise, and my note said nothing. This indulgence, making me beloved, grew more liberal every day. To liberty succeeded license, and I suffered it. I did more; such delight did I take in public favour that I encouraged it. Having heard that at Rome public shows were given by men in power, who wished to gain over the multitude, I took it into my head to imitate this example. I was told that one of our companions named Toury was the best performer of the Auvergnian dance that the mountains could boast. I allowed him to dance it, and, in doing so, he did certainly leap to a wonderful height. When they had once enjoyed the pleasure of seeing him bounding in the middle of the room, nothing else would satisfy them; while I, becoming always more complaisant, again called out for the dance. Now, you must know that the shoes of the dancer had iron soles and that the class-room was paved with a kind of stone that resounded like brass. The master, in going his rounds, heard this prodigious noise; he rushed in. Instantly the uproar ceased, everyone was in his place. Toury himself, with eyes fixed on his book, sat in his corner, quite torpid and motionless. The master came to me, boiling with rage, and demanded my note; it was blank. Conceive his irritation! Finding no one to punish, he treated me as the guilty person, and imposed a most severe task. I endured it without complaining. But though quiet and patient in whatever related only to myself, I was rebellious and determined as to not giving any disturbance to my schoolfellows. My courage was supported by the honour of hearing myself called the martyr, and sometimes even the hero of the class. In the second class, indeed, the liberty was less noisy, and the resentment of the master seemed to be softened; but, amid this tranquility, a new storm suddenly arose.

My master in the second class was no longer Father Malosse, who had loved me so much; it was now taught by one Father Cibier, as dry and sour as the other was mild and agreeable. Neither his capacity, nor, I believe, his learning, were great; yet he taught his class very well. He had a singular art of rousing emulation by exciting jealousy. If at any time a bad scholar had not done quite so ill as usual, he extolled him with such warmth as to put the best in dread of a new rival. In this spirit, reading over one day a certain theme which an indifferent scholar was supposed to have written, he defied any of us to equal it. Now, it was known in the class who it was that had written this theme which he was praising so loudly; it was kept a secret, for there was a severe prohibition against anyone doing the duty of another. But their impatience at hearing a borrowed merit so excessively praised could not be restrained. "Father," cried someone, "this theme which you extol so much was not written by him." "By whom, then?" said he, in a passion. They were all silent. "It is you who must tell me," said he, addressing himself to the scholar who had presented the theme; and he, weeping, named me. I was under a necessity of acknowledging my fault; but I besought the master to hear me. He listened. "It was," said I, "on the day of the festival of St. Peter, that Durif, our schoolfellow, was giving us a dinner. Being wholly taken up with preparing the entertainment for his friends, he could not complete the preparation for his class, and the theme gave him particular uneasiness. I thought it lawful and just to save him that trouble, and offered to labour for him while he was labouring for us."

There were, at least, two in fault; the master chose to see only one, and his wrath fell upon me. Bewildered, stupified with rage, he sent for the corrector to punish me as he said I had deserved. At the mention of the corrector I packed up my books and was going to leave college. My studies seemed at an end; my prospects in life were about to change. But that natural sentiment of justice, which, at an early age, is so quickly and strongly felt, forbade my schoolfellows to abandon me. "No!" cried the whole class, "this punishment would be unjust; and if he is obliged to go, we will all go with him." The master was pacified and forgave me, sheltering himself under the authority of the dictator Papirius.

The whole school approved this clemency except the head master, who maintained that it was an act of weakness, and that rebellion should never be yielded to. He himself, a year after, wished to practise upon me the rigour he so highly approved of; but he found that there was at least a necessity for being just before being rigorous.

We had only a month longer to spend in the rhetoric class before being emancipated from him, when he found me in a list of scholars whom he had resolved to punish for a most improbable fault, of which I was wholly innocent. In the steeple of the Benedictines, a few steps from the school, the clock was repairing. A number of scholars of different classes, curious to see the mechanism, had ascended this steeple. Whether from the awkwardness of the workman or from some unknown accident, the clock did not go; it was as difficult to suppose that thick iron wheels had been disordered by children, as that they had been eaten by mice. But the clockmaker accused them, and the master listened to his complaint. Next day, at the meeting of the afternoon class, he sent for me. I went to his apartment, and found ten or twelve scholars drawn up in a line round the wall. In the middle stood the corrector, who, at the orders of this terrible master, was flogging them one after the other. On seeing me, he asked if I was one of those who had gone up to the clock; and on my answering that I was, he pointed out with his finger my place in the circle, and then went on with his flogging. Snatching a moment when he was holding one of his victims who struggled under him, I at once opened the door and fled. He darted out to seize me, but missed his prey, and I got off with only a piece of my coat torn.

I took refuge in the class-room, where the master had not yet arrived. My torn clothes, my distress, the fear, or rather the indignation, of which I was full, served, instead of a preface, to draw their attention. "My friends," cried I, "save me, save yourselves, from the hands of a madman, who pursues us. It is your own honour, as well as mine, that I call upon you to defend. This violent and unjust man, this Father Bis, was on the point of committing upon you, in my person, the basest injury, by disgracefully whipping a rhetorician. He deigned not even to name the cause of this punishment; but the cries of the children, whom he was flaying alive, gave me to understand that it was about disordering a clock; an absurd accusation, which he must have seen to be false; but he delights in punishing, and in seeing us shed torrents of tears. Innocent or guilty, all is alike to him, provided he finds vent for his tyranny. My crime, my inexpiable crime, which he can never forgive, consists in not having chosen to betray you for his gratification, and in having rather endured his rigour than exposed my friends to it. You have seen how obstinately, for three years, he has sought to make me the spy and the informer of my class. You would be astonished at the enormous labour with which he has overwhelmed me, in hopes of forcing out notes which would afford him every day the pleasure of molesting you. My firmness got the better of his, his hatred seemed to fall asleep; but he watched for the moment of punishing me, of punishing you, for the fidelity which I have observed. Yes, my friends, had I been timid or weak enough to allow him to lay hands on me, rhetoric was dishonoured, and dishonoured for ever. This was his object. He wished it to be said that, in his time and under his rod, rhetoric had been humbled. Thank heaven, we are saved. He will, doubtless, be here presently, demanding that you should give me up, and I already feel secure as to the tone of your answer. But though my comrades should be base enough not to defend me, I alone would sell dear my honour and my life, and would die free rather than live in disgrace. But far be this thought from me; I see you all as determined as I am, to continue no longer under such a yoke. In a month our rhetoric would, at all events, have ended, and our vacation commenced. Now, we need not regret cutting off a month from the course of our studies. Let this, then, be the breaking-up of our class. From this moment we are free; and the haughty, the cruel, the ferocious man, is confounded."

My harangue had roused emotions of high indignation; the conclusion, in particular, had a most powerful effect. Never peroration carried the number of its hearers so rapidly along with it. "Yes! let us break up; vacation!" was carried with acclamation, by a great majority. And "Let us all," said they, "before leaving the class-room, swear, upon this altar (for there was one), that we will never more set foot within it."

After the oath had been pronounced, I resumed: "My friends, we ought not to quit this class-room like libertines or runaway slaves; let not the master say that we ran off. Our retreat must be made in a quiet and orderly manner; and, with the view of rendering it more honourable, I propose to distinguish it by a religious act. This room is a chapel. Let us render thanks to God, by a solemn *Te Deum*, for having obtained and preserved, during the course of our studies, the affection of our schoolfellows and the esteem of our masters."

Instantly I saw them all drawn up round the altar, and, amid deep silence, one of our companions, Valarché, whose voice rivalled that of the bulls in his native district of Cantal, thundered the hymn of praise; fifty voices replied, and it is easy to conceive the astonishment of the school at the noise occasioned by this extraordinary and sudden concert. Our master came up first, the head master came down, and the principal himself stalked gravely to the door of the class-room. The door was shut, nor did we open it till the *Te Deum* was sung; then, forming ourselves into a half-circle, the little boys close to the great ones, we allowed them to approach. "What sort of uproar is this?" cried the enraged head master, stalking into the middle of us. "Father," said I, "what you call an uproar is only the act of returning thanks to heaven for having allowed us to complete our early studies without falling into your hands." He threatened to inform our families of this criminal revolt, and, viewing me with a threatening and terrible aspect, he foretold that I would one day be the leader of a faction. He was ill acquainted with my character, and accordingly his prediction has never been verified. The principal wished, by a milder method, to recall us to our duty; but we entreated him not to insist on our breaking a resolution consecrated by an oath. Thus our good master alone remained with us. I say good; this praise is due to him; for though of a cast of mind less flexible and mild than Father Malosse, he might at least vie with him in goodness of heart. According to the idea which has been formed respecting the political character of a society, so rashly condemned and suppressed with so much severity, never man was less a Jesuit in his heart than Father Balme (such was the name of this master). His character was steady and frank; he observed in his class an impartiality, an uprightness, an inflexible justice, and expressed towards his scholars a dignified and tender esteem, which gained at once our respect and affection.

His natural sincerity sometimes allowed us to see, through the austere decorum of his order, symptoms of energy and pride, which were more allied to the courage of a soldier than to the character of a monk. I remember one day, when a rude and unpolished fellow in our class had given him an impertinent answer, he darted suddenly from his seat, and violently tore an oak plank from the floor of the class-room. "Wretch!" said he, holding it over his head, "I will not whip a rhetorician, but I will knock down whoever dares to violate the respect due to me." We were infinitely delighted with this kind of correction; we liked even the terror that had struck us at the sound of the broken plank, and saw with pleasure the insolent fellow falling on his knees before this kind of club, and humbly asking forgiveness.

This was the man to whom I was now to give an account of what had passed. I marked him as I went on; and when I informed him that one of his scholars had been on the point of undergoing the lash, I saw his countenance and his eyes inflamed with indignation; but after the first emotion was over, he said, endeavouring to cover his wrath under a smile, "Why did you not cry out, *sum civis Romanus?*" "I did not care to do that," replied I; "I had to do with a Verres."

However, that he might not be exposed to any reproach, Father Balme made every effort to retain us that his duty required; he employed arguments and entreaties of every kind. His efforts were fruitless; but this did not lower us in his esteem, and it increased his affection for me. "My good fellow," whispered he, "to whatever school you go, you may find my certificate of some advantage. This is not the time to offer it; but come in a month hence, and I shall give it you sincerely and heartily." Thus closed my rhetoric.

I had thus a pretty long vacation this year, but very luckily I found in my native town an old country curate, a distant relation, and a man of learning, who initiated me in the logic of Port Royal, and took also the trouble of accustoming me to speak Latin. In our walks, he would converse with me only in that language, which he himself spoke with facility. I found inestimable advantage from this habit when I came to attend philosophical lectures, which were given in Latin, and where, otherwise, I should have felt as if transported into a strange country. But before passing on to that period, I must take a short retrospective glance over the years that have already elapsed; I must talk of those annual vacations during which I went home, where my labours and troubles were rewarded by so pleasing a repose.

My little Christmas vacations were spent by my relations and myself in the enjoyment of our mutual tenderness, without any other diversion than the visits which friendship or propriety called for. As the weather was severe, the pleasure I felt most sensibly was that of finding myself comfortably seated by a good fire; for at

Mauriac, during the bitterest cold, when everything was frozen, and when in going to school we were forced to make a way for ourselves through the snow, on returning home we found only a few half-burnt billets hissing under the pot, and were scarcely allowed one after another to thaw our fingers. Most commonly, indeed, the chimney being besieged by the landlord and his family, it was a favour if we ever came near it; and during our evening studies, when our fingers, benumbed with cold, could no longer hold the pen, the flame of the lamp was the only heat with which we could relieve them. Some of my companions, born upon the mountain and hardened to the cold, endured it better than I, and accused me of effeminacy. In a chamber where the blast blew in upon us through the broken panes, they thought it ridiculous that I should be chilled, and amused themselves with my shiverings. I was ashamed of being so weak and so sensible of cold, and went with them upon the ice in the middle of snow, in order, if possible, to inure myself to the severity of winter; but though I thus subdued nature, I did not change it—I only learned to suffer. When I got home, therefore, the finding myself warm and comfortable, in a good bed, or by a good fireside, made one of the most delicious moments of my life—an enjoyment with which continued indulgence could never have made me acquainted.

In these Christmas vacations my worthy grandmother, with a look of deep mystery, disclosed to me the secrets of her household. She showed me her winter stores, as she would have done so many treasures; her bacon, her hams, her sausages, her pots of honey, her jars of oil, her piles of buck-wheat, of barley, of peas and beans, her heaps of turnips and chesnuts, her beds of straw covered with fruits. "See, my child," said she, "these are the bounties bestowed on us by Providence; how many worthy families have not received so much! and what thanks ought we to return for these favours."

Nothing could be more sober than this prudent housewife in whatever regarded herself; but it was her delight to see plenty reigning in the house. One treat, which she took the greatest pleasure in giving us, was the Christmas supper. As it took place every year, the family fully expected it, but, at the same time, studiously avoided showing this expectation; for every year she flattered herself that the surprise would be new, and of this pleasure they took care not to deprive her. While they were at mass, the green cabbage soup, the pudding, the sausage, the bright red piece of salt pork, the cakes, the apple fritters, were all with mysterious secrecy dressed by her and one of her sisters; I, who alone was privy to all these preparations, said not a word. After mass, the family arrived; and when, on finding this excellent repast on the table, they raised a cry of admiration at the magnificence of their worthy grandmother, this exclamation of surprise and joy was the fulfilment of her utmost wishes. On Twelfth-day, the bean afforded a new subject of rejoicing; and when the New Year came, the whole family embraced each other with such warmth, and exchanged such tender wishes for each other's welfare, that no one, I think, could have witnessed it without emotion. Conceive the father of a family, surrounded by a crowd of women and children; they raising their eyes and their hands to heaven, and calling down blessings on his head; while he answered their prayers by tears of love—ominous, perhaps, of our impending misfortune. Such scenes did this vacation present.

That of Easter was somewhat longer, so as, in fine weather, to allow me some time for amusement. I mentioned that in my native village great care was taken of the education of the boys; their example afforded to the girls an object of emulation. The instruction of the one improved the character of the other, and gave to their air, their language, and their manners, a certain politeness and propriety, with something peculiarly engaging, which I can never forget. An innocent freedom prevailed in this youthful society. The girls and boys walked together, even in the evening by moonlight. Their common amusement was singing; and their young voices united, made, I think, a pleasing harmony. I was very early admitted into this society, but till the age of fifteen it did not at all encroach on my love of study and solitude. I never was happier than in the bee-garden of St. Thomas, when I spent a fine day in reading Virgil's verses on the industry and regulation of these laborious republics, which I saw prospering under the care of one of my grand-aunts. She had observed their labours and their manners better than Virgil; she described them, also, better, made me view, with my own eyes, their wonderful instincts, and delighted me by pointing out marks of intelligence and wisdom, which had passed unobserved by that divine poet. In this love of my aunt for her bees, as in love of every kind, there was, perhaps, a certain illusion, and the interest she took in their young swarms, bore a great resemblance to that of a mother for her children; but, indeed, it seemed to be fully returned. I even thought I saw them delight in flying around her, in knowing her, in listening to, and obeying her voice; for their beneficent mistress they had no sting; and when, during a storm, she gathered, wiped, and warmed them with her breath and in her hands, it almost appeared that, on returning to life, they sweetly hummed their gratitude. There was no fear in the hive when their friend visited them; and if, on seeing any of them less active than usual, sick, or weak through fatigue or old age, her hand poured into the bottom of the hive a little wine to recruit their health and vigour, the same sweet murmur seemed to express their thanks. She had surrounded their little territory with fruit trees, such as flourish in early spring; she had introduced a little stream of clear water, which flowed over a bed of pebbles; on its banks, thyme, lavender, marjoram, all the plants whose flowers were most pleasant to them, offered them the first fruits of the fine season. But when the mountain began to bloom, and its aromatic herbs diffused their odours, our bees deigned no longer to amuse themselves with the spoil of their little orchard, but sought at a distance more copious riches; and when we saw them return loaded with stamina of various colours, purple, azure, and gold, my aunt told me the name of the flowers from which these had been stripped.

All that passed before my eyes, that my aunt related, and that I read in Virgil, attached me so strongly to this little nation, that while employed in observing their operations, I forgot myself, and could not withdraw without a sensible reluctance. Since that time, even till now, I have had such an affection for bees that I cannot, without affliction, think of the cruel practice which prevails in certain countries, of killing them in order to collect their honey. With us, when the hive was full, it was a relief to take away what was superfluous; but we left them what was abundantly sufficient for their support till the new blossoms appeared. We had art enough, without wounding any, to carry off such part of the comb as exceeded their wants.

During the long vacations at the end of the year, having fulfilled all my duties and gratified all my inclinations, I could spend some time in company; and I must confess that every year I took increased pleasure in that of the fair sex; but it was only, as I mentioned before, at the age of fifteen that I felt all its charms. The attachments which were formed among the young people gave no uneasiness to their families: there was so little inequality of rank and fortune, that the parents gave their consent almost as readily as the children. But that which was attended with no danger to my companions, might have the effect of extinguishing my emulation, and of rendering the fruit of my studies abortive.

I saw hearts selecting each other, and mutual ties forming between them. I felt a wish to follow the example. One of our young female companions, and the handsomest, as I thought, appeared to me to have still no fixed attachment, and to feel, like me, only a vague desire of pleasing. With all her freshness, she had not that soft and tender brilliancy with which beauty is represented when we compare it to the rose, but the vermilion, the down, the roundness of the peach, form an image that sufficiently resembles her. So handsome a mouth could not, surely, be devoid of wit. Her eyes and her smile were alone sufficient to embellish the simplest language; and "Good day," "Good evening," from her lips, appeared to me delicately pleasing. She might be a year or two older, and this inequality of age, joined to an air of prudence and judgment, rendered my rising love somewhat timid; but after endeavouring for some time to render my attentions agreeable, I gradually perceived that she was affected by them, and, as soon as it appeared possible that my passion could be returned, I became seriously in love. I owned it without reserve, and she, too, without reserve answered that her inclination was in unison with mine. "But you know well," said she, "that to be lovers, we must at least hope one day to be married; and at our age, how can we hope it? You are scarce fifteen; you are just going to your studies?" "Yes," said I, "such is my own resolution, and my mother's wish." "Well then," said she, "you must be absent five years before entering into any profession, and I shall be above twenty before we can know what you are intended for." "Alas!" said I, "it is too true, I cannot know what is to become of me; but swear to me, at least, that you will never marry without consulting with my mother and asking her whether I myself cannot offer you some hope." She promised, with a charming smile, to do so, and during the rest of the vacation we gave ourselves up to the pleasure of loving each other with all the frankness and innocence of our age. The walks we took by ourselves, our most interesting conversations, were spent in fancying for me future possibilities of success and fortune, that might be friendly to our wishes. But these pleasing illusions, following like dreams, in succession, destroyed each other. After pleasing ourselves for a moment, we ended with weeping over them, just as children weep after having built a castle of cards which a breath has overthrown.

As we sat one day in the meadow by the riverside, engaged in one of these conversations, an event happened that nearly cost me my life. My mother knew the particular attention I paid to Mademoiselle B——. She was uneasy at it, and dreaded lest love should cool my inclination and ardour for study. Her aunts perceived her uneasiness and pressed her so much that she could no longer dissemble the cause. From that time these honest women vied with each other in bitterness against this innocent young creature, accusing her of coquetry. One day, when my mother was inquiring for me, one of them set off to seek me in the meadow; and having found me *tête-à-tête* with the object of their resentment, she poured the most unjust reproaches on that amiable girl, not omitting the words "indecency" and "seduction." After this imprudent violence she went away and left us. I was furious, and my mistress in despair, stifled with sighs, and tears flowing from her eyes. Conceive the impression which her grief made upon my soul. It was in vain that I asked forgiveness, wept at her knees, besought her to despise, to forget this injustice. "Wretch that I am," cried she, "I am accused of seducing and of wishing to lead you astray! Fly from me! never see me more! No, I will never see you again." At these words she departed and forbade me to follow her.

I returned home with a distracted air, my eyes on fire, my head quite turned. Happily, my father was absent, and my mother was the only witness of my ravings. Seeing me pass by and go up to my room, she was terrified at my agitation. She followed me. I had locked myself in. She commanded me to open the door. "Oh! my mother," cried I, "in what a condition do you see me. I am in despair; I cannot command my feelings; I scarcely know myself. Spare me the shame of appearing before you in this condition." My whole forehead was covered with wounds which I had given it by striking my head against the wall. What a passion is anger! I experienced, for the first time, its excess and fury. My mother, distracted, pressing me in her arms and bathing me with tears, raised such doleful cries that all the women in the house, except one, hastened thither; and that one, who had confessed her fault, but did not dare to appear, was tearing her hair at the disaster she had occasioned.

Their lamentations, the deluge of tears which I saw flowing around me, the tender and timid sighs which I heard, softened my heart and made my anger subside; but I was nearly suffocated, the blood had swelled all my veins; there was a necessity for bleeding me. My mother was alarmed for my life. My grandmother, while the operation was performing, whispered to her what had passed; for in vain had she inquired of me. "Horror! barbarity!" were the only words I could utter in reply; it would have been at that moment dreadful to say more. But when the bleeding had given me some relief, and when a little tranquility had turned my rage into grief, I gave my mother a simple and faithful account of my passion, of the honourable and proper manner in which Mademoiselle B—— had returned it, and, finally, of the promise she had kindly given me never to marry without my mother's consent. "After this," said I, "how must the unjust and bitter reproaches which she has endured on my account have wounded her heart! how must they have rent mine! Ah! my mother, nothing can wipe off the disgrace." "Alas!" said she, weeping, "it is I who have caused it. My uneasiness about this connection has troubled your aunts' brains. If you do not pardon them, you must refuse also to pardon your mother." At these words I threw my arms around her and strained her to my heart.

In obedience to her command I had lain down. The agitation of my blood, though somewhat abated, was by no means stilled. All my nerves were shaken, and the image of this interesting and unfortunate girl, whom I believed inconsolable, was present to my thought, in features expressive of the keenest and most piercing anguish. My mother saw that this idea had got possession of me; and my heart, still more troubled than my brain, kept my blood and spirits in a state of irregular action that resembled a burning fever. The physician, not knowing the cause, foreboded a serious illness, and talked of preventing it by a second bleeding. "Do you think," asked my mother, "that it may be delayed till the evening?" He answered that it might. "Then, sir, return this evening; till then I will take care of him."

My mother, advising me to attempt taking some rest, left me alone; and, a quarter of an hour after, she returned accompanied—by whom? You who know Nature must foresee it. "Save my son; restore him to my arms," said she, leading to the bedside my youthful mistress. "This dear boy thinks you are offended; tell him that you are so no longer, that your forgiveness has been asked, and that you have granted it." "Yes," said this charming girl, "I have now only thanks to render to your excellent mother; and there can be no offence so great, which the kindness with which she loads me, would not banish from my recollection!" "Ah!

mademoiselle, it is I who ought to be grateful for the care which her affection takes in restoring me to life." My mother then seated by my pillow her whose aspect and voice diffused over my soul so pure and mild a tranquility. She also kindly assumed the appearance of yielding to our illusions. After recommending to both good behaviour and piety, she said: "Who knows what heaven intends for you? Heaven is just; you are both well disposed; and love itself may render you still more worthy of being happy." "These," said Mademoiselle B——, "are indeed consoling words, and well suited to tranquillize you. I, as you see, feel no longer any anger, any resentment in my soul. Your aunt, whose impatience had hurt me, has expressed her regret. I have embraced her; but she is still weeping. Will not you, who are so kind-hearted, embrace her also?" "With all my heart," replied I; upon which my good aunt instantly made her appearance, and watered my bed with her tears. The physician, when he came in the evening, found my pulse still a little quick, but perfectly regular.

My father, on his return from the journey he had made to Clermont, declared his intention of carrying me thither—not, according to my mother's wish, for the purpose of prosecuting my studies and going through a course of philosophy, but of entering into business. "There has been enough of study and Latin," said he; "it is time to think of introducing him to some useful profession. I have procured a situation for him in the house of a rich merchant; the counting-room will be his school." My mother opposed this resolution with the whole force of her affection, her grief and her tears; but, seeing that she distressed my father without persuading him, I prevailed upon her to yield. "Just let me go to Clermont," said I; "and, when I am there, I will find means to satisfy you both."

Had I followed only my new attachment, I should have been of my father's opinion; for trade would, in a few years, have placed me in tolerable circumstances. But my passion for study, and the wish of my mother—which, so long as she lived, was ever my supreme law—alike forbade my listening to the counsels of love. I set out, therefore, with the intention of reserving, every evening and morning, an hour and a half of my time, in which I might attend the classes; and flattered myself that my master would be satisfied with an assurance that all the rest of the day should be his. But he would not listen for a moment to this proposition, and required me to make my option between business and study. "What, sir!" said I, "when I labour constantly eight hours a day in your counting-house, is not that sufficient? What would you require from a slave?" He replied that I was welcome to be more at liberty elsewhere. I did not give him the trouble of repeating the observation, but instantly took my leave.

My whole property consisted of two half-crowns, which my father had given me as pocket-money, and some sixpenny-pieces which my grandmother, at taking leave, had slipped into my hand. But the want with which I was threatened formed the least of my troubles. By quitting the profession for which my father destined me, I was acting against his will; I seemed to withdraw myself from under his authority. Would he forgive me? would he not come to recall me, and fix me down to my duty? and even though he should abandon me in anger, how bitterly would he reproach my mother as having been accessory to my misconduct. I experienced a severe punishment in the very idea of the affliction that I should occasion my mother. With troubled thoughts, and with a heavy heart, I entered a church, and had recourse to prayer, the last refuge of the unhappy. There a thought struck me, as it were by inspiration, which suddenly changed in my eyes the prospect of life, and the dream of the future.

At peace with myself, and hoping that my father also would be propitiated by the sacredness of the motive which I had to urge, my first object was to find a place to sleep in. I hired an attic apartment near the college, the whole furniture of which consisted of a bed, a table and a chair, the whole at fivepence a week, for my situation did not admit of an agreement for a longer time. To these articles I added a hermit's vessel, and laid in a stock of bread, fresh water and prunes.

After having fixed myself, and taken a frugal supper at my lodgings, I went to bed, but slept little. Next day I wrote two letters, one to my mother, in which I stated the inhuman refusal which I had received from the inflexible merchant; the other was to my father, in which, using the language of religion and Nature, I besought him not to oppose the resolution with which I had been inspired—of devoting myself to the altar. So sincere indeed was my belief in this holy vocation, and so lively was then my faith in the plans and intentions of Providence, that, in the letter to my father, I held out almost a certain hope of no longer costing him any expense; and asked only his consent and blessing in the prosecution of my studies.

My letter furnished a text for my mother's eloquence. She imagined she saw my path marked out by the angels, and shining with light like the ladder of Jacob. My father, with less superstition, was no less pious. He was prevailed upon to allow my mother to write to me his approbation of my holy resolutions. At the same time she transmitted to me some pecuniary aid, which I made little use of, and was soon able to return without any deduction.

I had been informed that at the college of Clermont, which was much more considerable than that of Mauriac, the masters were assisted by private tutors: this was the employment to which I looked forward; but, in order to obtain it, I must acquire, as speedily as possible, a reputation in the college, and, notwithstanding my being only fifteen, must force myself into the confidence of the masters.

I forgot to mention that, after the breaking-up of the classes in the school, I had gone to receive the certificate of my rhetoric master; he gave me one as complete as possible; and, after having tenderly embraced and thanked him, as I was going away with eyes that were still moistened, I met in the corridor the head master, who had treated me with such severity. "Oh! sir," said he, "you are there; whence come you?" "I have just been seeing Father Balme, and bidding him farewell." "He has doubtless given you a favourable certificate." "Yes, Father, very favourable, for which I feel much gratitude." "You are not asking mine; you think, I suppose, that you have no occasion for it?" "Alas, Father, most happy should I be to receive it, but that is what I dare not hope." "Come to my room," said he, "I will show you how little you know my character." I went in. He seated himself at his table, and wrote a certificate, containing praises still more extravagant than that of my own master. He then showed it to me, and said, before sealing it up: "Read—if you are not satisfied, I will give you something still more ample." As I read, I felt myself overwhelmed with confusion. I stood before Father Bis like Cinna before Augustus. All the odious names which I had lavished upon him appeared in my recollection like so many calumnies, of which I had been the author; the more magnanimity he displayed, the more I felt confounded and humbled in his presence; but, at length, when my eyes, filled with tears, dared to meet his, and I saw him affected by my contrition, I said with transport, "Do you then forgive me, Father?" and threw myself into his arms. I am aware that scenes, which a man has witnessed himself, have a peculiar interest in his eyes, which others cannot feel; yet I am mistaken if, even to indifferent persons, this would not have been an affecting scene.

Being furnished with these certificates, I had only to present them to the head master at Clermont; I might instantly, and without examination, have been admitted into the philosophical class. But this was not my object. Praise, however flattering, when only expressed in words, makes but a faint impression; I wanted something more striking, and which might bring me more immediately under their eye. I wished to be examined.

I applied to the head master, and, without telling him whence I came, asked his permission to attend the philosophical class. "From what place do you come?" asked he. "From Bort, Father." "Where did you study?" Here I allowed myself to prevaricate a little. "My master," replied I, "was a country curate." An expression of disdain became visible on his lips and eyebrows; and opening a book of exercises, he proposed to me one in which there was no difficulty. I performed it with a stroke of the pen, and elegantly enough. "And your master," said he, reading it, "was only a country curate?" "Yes, Father." "You shall translate this evening." Chance would have it that the passage he gave me formed part of an oration of Cicero, which I had gone over in the rhetoric class; so that it was translated with ease, as quickly as the exercise had been performed. "And is it indeed," said he again, on reading my version, "a country curate with whom you studied?" "You must plainly perceive it," said I. "That I may perceive it still more plainly, I shall to-morrow make you compose an amplification." This lengthened examination appeared to indicate a degree of curiosity that promised favourably. The subject he proposed was no less encouraging: it was the regret and parting adieu of a scholar who quits his relations before going to college. What could be more suited to my situation, and to the feelings of my soul! Would I could yet recall the expression which I gave to the sentiments of the mother and son! These words, inspired by Nature, whose eloquent simplicity no art can imitate, were watered with my tears. The master perceived it; but what most astonished him (for there the picture, though drawn from truth, was somewhat like fancy), was the place in which, rising above myself, I introduced the young man expressing to his father the sanguine hope of one day, by dint of attention and industry, becoming the consolation, the support and the honour of his old age, and of repaying to his other children what his education had cost him. "And you have studied with a country curate!" exclaimed he, still more emphatically. On this occasion I kept silence, and only cast my eyes to the ground. "Well," resumed he, "has this country curate taught you to write verses?" I answered that I had some idea of the art, but had practised it very little. "I shall be glad to see that," said he, with a smile. "Come this evening before the hour that my class meets." The subject he gave me was: "Wherein does fiction differ from lying?" This was a very convenient subject for me; and was perhaps proposed by him with the view of affording me an opportunity of excusing myself.

I endeavoured to prove that fiction was a mere indulgence of gaiety, or of harmless invention: it was an ingenious art of amusing in order to instruct: sometimes even it assumed the sublime office of embellishing truth itself; of rendering her more amiable, more interesting, and more attractive, by throwing over her a transparent veil interwoven with flowers. Lying, on the contrary, was easily proved to arise from the meanness of a soul which disguises its own thoughts and opinions; from the impudence of a deceitful character which, in order to gain respect, alters and disfigures the truth, and whose language bears the stamp of cunning and malice, of fraud and atrocity.

"Now tell me," said the artful Jesuit, "whether this be fiction or lying, that you have told me of your master being a country curate, for I am pretty certain that you have studied at Mauriac under our society." "Though both be true," said I, "yet, Father, I admit that had my intention been to deceive you, I should have been telling a lie; but though I delayed to mention what you now know, it was from no design of concealing it, or of allowing you to continue in an error. It was of importance that you should know me better, than even by the very good certificates which I can produce, and which you shall now see. Upon these testimonies you would have granted, without examination, my first request; but I have a more essential one to make. Whilst studying, I must also teach; you must give me scholars, and thereby enable me to gain my bread. The family to which I belong is numerous and poor; I am anxious to be no longer a burden to them. Till I can assist them, I seek what every unfortunate man may ask without blushing, employment and bread." "Ah! child," said he, "how can you at your age be listened to, obeyed, and respected by your equals? You are scarce fifteen." "True; but, Father, do you reckon for nothing the influence of misfortune? Consider how much it promotes the authority of reason, and hastens the maturity of age. Make a trial of my character; perhaps you may find it sedate enough to make my youth be forgotten." "I will see," said he, "I will consult." "No, Father, there is no time for consultation. I must be placed immediately on the list of assistants and begin to teach. It matters not to what class my scholars belong. Be assured they will do their duty. You will be satisfied with my conduct." He promised, though rather faintly; and, having received his ticket, I went to begin my logical studies.

The very next day I saw reason to think that the professor had some favour for me. The logic of Port Royal, and the practice of speaking Latin, both of which I had learned with my country curate, gave me a considerable superiority over my companions. I was eager to display my powers, and omitted nothing that could bring me into notice. Yet weeks passed on without any news from the head master. I waited quietly, not wishing to tease him. Sometimes, indeed, I threw myself in his way, and bowed to him with a beseeching look, but he took scarcely any notice of me. I went up, in very bad spirits to my lofty habitation, where, left to my own thoughts, I sat down in tears to a repast that might have suited a hermit. Luckily, I had excellent bread.

Madame Clement, a worthy little woman, who lodged under me, and had a kitchen, felt a curiosity to know where mine was situated. She called on me one morning. "Sir," said she, "I hear you always, at the dinner-hour, going up alone to your room, where there is no fire, and nobody goes up after you. Excuse me, but I feel uneasy about your situation." I acknowledged that at this particular time my circumstances were not very flourishing; but added that I should presently be supplied with ample means of subsistence, that I was qualified to teach a school, and that the Jesuits were to provide for me. "The Jesuits, indeed!" said she, "depend upon it, their heads are quite otherwise taken up; they will amuse you with promises, but will leave you to starve. Why do you not go to Riom, to the Fathers of the Oratory? They will give you fewer fine words, but they will do more for you than they promise." It is needless to say that I spoke to a Jansenist. I felt grateful for the concern she took in my welfare, and, expressing a disposition to follow her advice, requested some information about the Fathers of the Oratory. "They are worthy men," said she, "whom the Jesuits detest, and would willingly destroy. But it is dinner-time; come and eat my soup. I will tell you more." I accepted her invitation; and, though the repast was certainly very frugal, I never dined more heartily in my life. My spirits were particularly revived by two or three small glasses of wine, which she made me drink. In one hour I learned all that was to be known concerning the animosity of the Jesuits against the Oratory, and the jealous rivalship between the two schools. My neighbour added, that if I went to Riom I should carry with me good recommendations. I thanked her for these proffered services; and, being placed on high ground by her intentions and my own hopes, I went to call on the head master. He appeared surprised at seeing me, and coldly inquired what I wanted with him. This reception fully convinced me of what my neighbour had said. "I have called, Father," replied I, "to take leave of you." "You are going, then?" "Yes, Father, I am going to Riom, where the Fathers of the Oratory will give me as many scholars as I please." "What! child, you are about to leave us? You, educated in our schools, turn out a deserter?" "Alas! I do it with reluctance; but you can do nothing for me, and I am assured that these good fathers——" "These good fathers are but too expert in seducing and gaining over credulous young people like you. But be assured, child, they have neither the same degree of credit nor power that we have." "Show it, then, Father, by giving me employment that will support me." "Well, I am contriving, I am endeavouring to do it; and, meantime, I will provide for your wants." "Father, what do you call providing for my wants? Know that my mother would sooner want the necessaries of life than allow a stranger to assist me. But I will no longer receive aid, even from my family; I must subsist on the fruit of my own labour. Do you give me the means, or I will seek them elsewhere." "No, no! you must not go," says he, "I forbid it. Your professor esteems you. Let us call on him together." He took me immediately to the professor's house. "Do you know, Father," said he, "what is like to become of this child? He is invited to Riom. The Fathers of the Oratory, these dangerous men, are attempting to make him a proselyte. He is going to throw himself away, but we must save him." My professor took up the affair still more warmly than the head master. They both gave a wonderful account of me to all the masters in the school. My fortune was now made. I got a school, which, being attended by twelve scholars, who paid each four livres a month, yielded an income above all my wants. I got a comfortable lodging; I lived well; and, by Easter, I was able to dress myself decently as an abbé, a thing which I had the greatest desire for, both that my father might be the more assured of the sincerity of my vocation, and that I might appear in the college under a respectable character.

On leaving my garret, Madame Clement, on whom I called to inform her of what was doing for me, did not express all the pleasure that I could have wished. "Ah!" said she, "I should have been much happier to have seen you go to Riom. The studies there are good and holy." I besought her to retain her kindness, in case I should again stand in need of it; and, even during my opulence, I sometimes visited her.

My ecclesiastical dress, the decorum which it imposed, together with that desire of personal consideration, which the example of Amalvy had formerly excited, produced happy effects on my character, particularly that of rendering me reserved and circumspect in forming acquaintances. I was in no haste to choose my friends, and chose only a small number. There were four of us, who were always together in our parties of pleasure—that is to say, in our walks. We had subscribed, at common cost—which was very small—with an old bookseller, who agreed to furnish us with materials of reading;

and, as good books are, fortunately, the most common, we read only such as were excellent. The great orators, the great poets, the best writers of the last century, joined with some of the present — though of these the bookseller had but few—went from hand to hand. In our walks each gave an account of what he had been reading, so that our conversations consisted almost wholly of these studious conferences. In one of our walks to Beauregard, the country-house belonging to the bishopric, we had the happiness of seeing the venerable Massillon. So kind was the reception we met with from that illustrious old man, his accent and the tone of his voice made so lively and tender an impression on me, as to form one of the most pleasing recollections which I retain of my youthful years.

At that age, when the affections of the mind and soul have so sudden a communication, when thought and feeling so rapidly act and re-act on each other, there is no one whose fancy, on seeing a great man, has not stamped on his forehead the features that characterise his soul and his genius. Thus, amid the wrinkles of that countenance already decayed, and in those eyes that were soon to be extinguished, I thought myself yet able to distinguish the expression of that eloquence, so feeling, so tender, so lofty, so profoundly penetrating, with which the perusal of his sermons had just enchanted me. He allowed us to mention them and to pay him the homage of the religious tears which they had caused us to shed.

My labour was excessive during the year I attended the logic class, as, without reckoning my private studies, I had to prepare my scholars, evening and morning, for three other classes. I then went home to enjoy a little repose ; nor was it, I confess, without some feeling of pride, that I appeared before my father, well dressed, with a number of little presents for my sisters, and with some money which I had saved. My mother embraced me and wept for joy. My father received me kindly, but with less warmth. All the rest of the family seemed enchanted at seeing me.

The joy of Mademoiselle B—— was not quite so unmingled, and I felt very awkward and uneasy at appearing before her in the dress of an abbé. It is true that by this change I had not quitted her for another; but still I had quitted her, and that was enough. I knew not how to behave on the occasion. I asked my mother's advice on this delicate subject. "My son," said she, "she has a right to express chagrin and irritation; nay, even something still more poignant—coldness and disdain. You must bear it all, must ever express for her the tenderest esteem, and must treat with infinite forbearance a heart which you have wounded.

Mademoiselle B—— was mild and indulgent. She behaved with a reserved and dignified politeness, avoiding carefully, however, any private conversation with me. In company, therefore, we were on so good a footing together as left no ground to believe that we had formerly been on a better.

The second year of my attendance on the class of philosophy was still more laborious than the first. My school was increased; I paid it the utmost attention; and having, besides, disputations to maintain on general subjects, long night-watchings were necessary to prepare me for this exercise.

On the day when, by a public appearance, I had ended my course of philosophy, I learned that fatal event which plunged my family and myself into an abyss of affliction.

After my disputation, my friends and I met, as usual, in the professor's room, to share a repast, which joy was wont to enliven; yet, in the congratulations addressed to me, I saw nothing but sadness. As I had solved very well the difficulties that had been proposed to me, I was surprised that my companions, that the professor himself, should not wear a face of greater satisfaction. "Ah!" said I, "had I done well, you would not all have looked so sad." "Alas! my dear child," said the professor, "the sadness at which you are surprised is, indeed, deep and sincere. Would to heaven it had arisen from your success being less brilliant than it has really been! I must announce to you a much more cruel misfortune. You have no longer a father." I sank under the blow, and remained a quarter of an hour without speech or colour. Restored to life and to tears, I wished to set out immediately to save my poor mother from despair. But had I set out without a guide, night would have overtaken me in passing over the mountains. It was necessary to wait till daybreak. I had to travel twelve long leagues on a hired horse, which, though I encouraged it as much as possible, went very slowly. During this mournful journey, one thought, one image alone, was present to my mind—employed it without ceasing; and scarcely could the united strength of my soul resist its impression. But I must soon summon courage to view the reality, to contemplate it in its gloomiest horrors.

I arrive at the door at midnight; I knock; I tell my name. Instantly arises a plaintive murmur, a confusion of voices in distress. The whole family rise; the door is opened, and, on entering, I am encircled by this distracted family; mother, children, old women—all half-naked, like spectres—extend their arms to me with the most piercing and heart-rending cries. I found suddenly within me a new strength, such, doubtless, as Nature reserves for extreme misery. I never felt so superior to myself. An enormous weight of grief was laid upon me. I did not sink under it. I opened my arms, my bosom, to this crowd of unhappy beings. I embraced them all, and, with the firmness of a man inspired by heaven, I, who weep so easily, now showed no weakness and shed no tear. "My mother, my brothers, my sisters," said

I, "we are suffering the greatest of calamities; but let us not sink under its pressure. My children, you lose a father; you find one again. I will supply his place; am, I will be, your father. I take upon myself all his duties, and you are orphans no more." At these words loods of tears—but tears mingled with less bitterness—flowed from their eyes. "Ah!" cried my mother, "my son, my dear child, how well I knew you!" My brothers and sisters, my aunts, my grandmother, fell on their knees. This affecting scene would have lasted the whole night, had I been able to support it. Overwhelmed with fatigue, I asked for a bed. "Ah!" said my mother, "there is no bed in the house than that of——" Tears choked her utterance. "Give it me," said I; "I will lie down in that without reluctance." I lay down, but slept not; my nerves were too deeply agitated. The whole night I beheld the image of my father, as distinct, as deeply impressed on my soul as if he had been present. I sometimes thought I actually saw him. I felt no terror; I extended my arms; I spoke. "Ah!" said I, "why is it not real; why are you not what I seem to behold? Why cannot you answer me, and say, at least, if you are satisfied with my conduct?" After this long watching and this troubled reverie, which amounted not to a dream, the approach of daylight was grateful. My mother, who had not slept any more than myself, was waiting till I awoke. When she heard a noise she came in. She was terrified at the change in my appearance; my skin seemed to have been dyed in saffron.

A physician was called, who said that this was an effect of deep grief suppressed, and that mine might produce the most formidable consequences if something were not done to remove it. "A journey," said he, "a change of scene, is the best and surest remedy which I am able to point out. But do not mention it as a diversion, to which a person in deep distress is ever averse. We must, without his knowledge, seek to withdraw him from his sorrow; we must deceive, in order to cure him."

The old curate, who had given me instructions during the vacation, offered to take me home with him to the centre of the diocese, where his residence lay, and to keep me there as long as my health should require. But, for this journey, a motive must be given; and it was afforded by the design, which I myself entertained, of taking the tonsure from the hands of my bishop, before proceeding farther; for one of my hopes was, by a happy chance, to succeed in obtaining a simple benefice.

"I intend," said my mother, "to spend this year in arranging and regulating the household affairs. For you, my son, hasten to enter into the career to which God calls you; make yourself known to our holy bishop, and ask his advice."

The physician was in the right. There are sorrows which attach us more strongly than pleasure itself. Never, during the happiest period, when the paternal mansion was for me so sweet and so smiling, did I quit it with such pain as now, when it had become the house of mourning. Of six louis, which I had saved, my mother allowed me to leave her only three; and, being still abundantly rich, I went with my old friend to his curacy of St. Bonet.

BOOK II

The tranquility, the silence of the hamlet of Abloville, in which I now write, remind me of the peace which my soul regained during my residence at the village of St. Bonet. The country round was not so smiling nor so fruitful. The loaded branches of the apple and cherry-tree did not shade the corn-fields; yet there, too, Nature displayed a certain species of embellishment and plenty. She had galleries formed by overshadowing vine-branches, saloons of fruit-trees, and carpets of green turf; the cock held there his court of love; the hen tended her little family; the chesnut-tree majestically displayed its shade and lavished its gifts; the fields, the meadows, the woods, country labour and fishing in the ponds, formed rural scenes sufficiently interesting to employ a vacant mind. Mine, after the long labour of my studies and the cruel shock which it had received from the death of my father, stood in need of this recreation.

My curate had some books suited to his profession, which was also to be mine. I was destined for the Church; he directed my studies with that view; he gave me a relish for the perusal of the sacred volume, and pointed out, in the fathers of the Church, good examples of evangelical eloquence. This old man was naturally of a gay disposition, which, however, he indulged with me only so far as seemed necessary to banish daily some shade of my gloomy melancholy. It dispersed by degrees, and joy found access to my heart. That sentiment, along with friendship, presided twice a month over dinners which the neighbouring curates partook together, and which they gave by turns. I was admitted to these entertainments, where, through emulation, I acquired a taste for French poetry. Almost all these curates wrote French verses, and sent each other poetical invitations, the gaiety of which much delighted me. In imitation of them, I made some attempts, which were favourably received. Happy society of poets, where no one was envious, no one was difficult to please; where each was as satisfied with himself and with others, as if the circle had been wholly composed of Horaces and Anacreons!

This leisure was not the object of my journey, nor did I forget that I had come to Limoges for the purpose of taking the tonsure; but the bishop gave it formally only once a year, and the period was past. I must either wait, or solicit a particular favour. I chose rather to submit to the common rule, for the following reason. Before the annual ceremony of tonsure, the candidates resided for a short time at the convent of the Sulpicians, who professed to observe the character of the candidates, their natural disposition, the talents which they promised to display, and to make a report of these things to the bishop. I stood in need of being recommended to him, which I could not expect without being first observed, mentioned, or distinguished among the crowd. Necessity, the mother of invention, prompted me to avail myself of this opportunity of being noticed by the Sulpicians and by the bishop. But to stay with my poor curate during these six months of expectation would have been making myself too great a burden to him. Happily, among his friends and neighbours, there was a worthy nobleman, the Marquis of Linars, who expressed to me, through his chaplain, an earnest desire that I would devote this period of leisure to one of his sons, a young Knight of Malta; a fine boy, but whose education had been hitherto neglected. I prevailed on my friend the curate to give his consent to this proposal, and then engaged myself. I had every reason to be satisfied with the marks of good-will and esteem with which I was honoured in this illustrious house, which was frequented by all the nobility of the province. The Marchioness herself, being of the Mortemart family, and educated at Paris, was a little haughty in her general deportment. With me, however, she was always kind and frank; because I behaved to her with that simple and unaffected politeness which has always made me feel at my ease in society, without danger of becoming offensive to anyone. When the time arrived for receiving the tonsure, I went to the seminary, where I found myself, with twelve other candidates, placed under the eye of three Sulpicians. The gravity and silence which prevailed, and the devout exercises in which we were constantly employed, appeared, at first, unfavourable to my views; but, while I was giving up all hopes of bringing myself into notice, an unexpected opportunity occurred. We were allowed, twice a day, to take an hour's amusement in a little garden planted with rows of lime-trees. My companions diverted themselves with playing at quoits, while I, having no relish for the game, took a walk by myself. One of our directors came to me one day, and asked why I indulged in solitude, and did not associate with my companions. I replied that I was the eldest, and, at my age, found it agreeable to be occasionally by myself, for the purpose of recollecting, classifying and arranging my ideas; that I wished to fix in my mind what I had read and studied; and my memory being unfortunately deficient, it was by deep meditation only that I could supply that defect. This reply drew on a conversation. The Sulpician wished to know where I had studied, what system I had maintained in my disputations, and for what kind of reading I felt most inclination. I answered all these questions. A director of the seminary of Limoges did not, as you may suppose, while he examined a boy of eighteen, expect to find a great store of knowledge; my little repository, therefore, must have appeared to him a treasure.

I augured well from the success of my first attempt when, at the hour of our evening walk, instead of one Sulpician there arrived two. I now felt the value of my reading at Clermont. I had mentioned that my peculiar predilection was for eloquence, and had rapidly named such of our Christian orators as I admired most. This subject was again introduced. I had now to analyze them, to point out distinctly their different characters, and to quote from each the passages that had struck me with the greatest astonishment, filled me with the highest emotion, or transported me by the brilliancy and charms of their eloquence. The two men of whom I spoke with the greatest enthusiasm were Bourdaloue and Massillon. But I had not time to unfold all my ideas on this subject. It was not until the next day that I enlarged upon their merits. I could describe the plan of all their sermons; the extracts I had written from them were full in my recollection; their introductions, their divisions, their happiest strokes, their very texts, crowded on my memory. On this day, indeed, that faculty performed its office well; instead of two Sulpicians, as the evening before, three were now my auditors, who, after listening in silence, all went away, as if lost in astonishment.

From this time they walked with me constantly during our leisure hours; and the rest of our conversation turned more generally on the finest funeral orations of Bossuet and Flechier, upon some sermons of La Rue, and upon the small collection of those of Cheminais, which I knew almost by heart. Then, I know not how, we came to speak of the poets. I acknowledged that I had read some, and mentioned the great Corneille. "And have you," asked one of the

Sulpicians, "read the tender Racine?" "Yes," said I, "I plead guilty; but Massillon had read him before me, and had learned from him to address the heart with such feeling and beauty. And think you," asked I, "that Fénélon, the author of Telemachus, had not read twenty times over the story of Dido's love, in the Æneid?"

The mention of Virgil led our conversation to the classic authors; and these gentlemen, who knew not the necessity I had been under of studying deeply the Latin authors, were surprised to see me so fully acquainted with them. I indulged myself very fully, as you may suppose, in the pleasure of displaying this knowledge. Verse and prose flowed as from an inexhaustible fountain; and at last I appeared to stop, only from the apprehension of overpowering them altogether.

I concluded by a display of my learning recently acquired at St. Bonet. The books of Moses and of Solomon had been already passed in review, and I had reached the holy Fathers when the day arrived for receiving the tonsure. On this day, therefore, after having the ecclesiastical characters conferred upon us, we were conducted by our three directors into the presence of the bishop. He received all with equal kindness; but, while I was retiring with my companions, he sent for me. My heart beat.

"My child," said he, "you are not a stranger to me; you have been recommended to me by your mother. She is, indeed, an excellent woman, for whom I have the greatest esteem. Where do you intend to complete your studies." I replied that I had not yet formed any resolution upon the subject, that I had just been so unfortunate as to lose my father, and that my family, who were numerous and poor, depended wholly upon me. It would be necessary for me, therefore, to find some university which, during the course of my studies, might afford means, both of subsisting myself and of affording aid to my mother and to our children. "And to *your* children," replied he, affected by this expression. "Yes, my lord, I am their second father; while I live I am determined to fulfil the duties of that character." "Listen," said he, "the Archbishop of Bourges, one of our worthiest prelates, is my friend; I can recommend you to him, and if he attends to my recommendation, as I hope he will, your only care, for yourself and friends, will then be to deserve his protection, by making a proper use of the talents which heaven has bestowed on you." I thanked the bishop for his good intentions, but I asked time to inform my mother and to receive her advice, not doubting that the proposal would be as agreeable to her as it was to myself.

I then went to take leave of the worthy curate, who was transported with joy on learning this offer, which he called an interposition of heaven in my favour. What would he have said could he have forseen that this Archbishop of Bourges would be grand almoner, cardinal, the minister for filling up vacant benefices, and that the eloquence to which I intended to devote myself would have the most interesting opportunities of being distinguished at Court. Certainly, for a young ecclesiastic who, with much emulation, united considerable talents, a splendid career was opened. I have had occasion more than once to admire how our destiny is entangled and disentangled, and of how many thin and brittle threads its fabric is composed.

On my arrival at Linars, I wrote my mother that I had taken the tonsure under the most favourable auspices; that I had received from the bishop the most affecting expressions of kindness; that I would come, as soon as possible, and give her an account of what had passed. The same day I received from her, by express, a letter, which her tears had rendered almost illegible. "Is it true," asked she, "that you have been so foolish as to enlist in the company of the Count de Linars, the Marquis's brother, and captain in the Enghien regiment? If you have been so unhappy, inform me. I will sell the whole of my little property to ransom my son. O God! is this, indeed, the son you gave me?"

Conceive the despair into which I was thrown by this letter. Mine had made a circuit in its way to Bort; my mother would not receive it for two days; and, meanwhile, I beheld her in despair. I instantly wrote that what she had been told was a horrible falsehood, that this criminal folly had never once entered my thoughts, that my heart was rent on account of the distress she must suffer, and that I asked pardon for being the innocent cause of it. But she ought to have known me too well to believe this absurd calumny, and I would soon show that my conduct was neither that of a libertine nor of a giddy young fool. The express set out immediately; but so long as, by counting the hours, it appeared that my mother was yet undeceived, I was myself on the rack.

The distance from Linars to Bort was, if I remember rightly, sixteen leagues, and, though I had besought the express to travel the whole night, how could I trust that he would not take a little rest. None could I take, nor did I cease to bathe my pillow in tears from the thought of those which my mother was shedding, until I heard a trampling of horses in the court. I rose and discovered the Count de Linars newly arrived. Without taking time to dress, I was flying to meet him; but he prevented me, and, entering like a man in despair, said: "Ah, sir! how criminal must you think me, in consequence of a rash action, which has agonised your family and has thrown your mother into a distress which I cannot relieve. She believes you enlisted with me. In a state bordering on distraction, she threw herself at my feet and offered, as the price of your discharge, her golden cross, her ring, her purse and everything she had in the world. In vain did I assure her; in vain did I protest that no such engagement existed. She considers this as a refusal to set you at liberty. Set out instantly; let your presence dispel her fears." "Ah, sir! who can have given currency to this fatal rumour?" "Sir," said he, "it is myself. I am in despair; I implore your forgiveness. Being in want of new recruits, I was endeavouring to raise a few in your village. I found there some young people who had a desire to enlist, but who were still undecided. I saw that your example only was necessary in order to determine them. I yielded to the temptation, and told them that they would have you for a companion, for that I had enlisted you; thus the report spread." "Ah, sir!" I indignantly exclaimed, "can such a falsehood have come from the lips of a man like you?" "Overwhelm me," said he, "with the most mortifying reproaches; I deserve them all. But this stratagem, the effects of which I did not at all foresee, has shown me a maternal character such as I never saw before. Go and comfort your mother; she has much need to see you again."

The Marquis of Linars, to whom his brother acknowledged his fault and all the mischief it had occasioned, having given me a horse and a guide, I set out next day. But I set out in a fever, for my blood was inflamed; and, towards evening, a paroxysm seized me at the very time that the guide had lost his way amid bye-roads. I sat shivering on horseback; and, in an hour, when night would have overtaken us in the open country, I saw a man crossing my way. I called to him to inquire where I was, and if we were far from the village to which my guide was conducting me. "You are more than three leagues from it," said he, "and you are out of the road." But, as he was speaking, he had recognised me; he was a young townsman of mine. "Is it you?" said he, addressing me by name. "By what chance do I meet you at such an hour among these wilds? You seem to be ill. Where are you going to pass the night? ' Where are *you* going?" said I. "I am going," said he, "to visit one of my uncles in a village at no great distance." "Well," returned I, "do you think your uncle would give me shelter in his house till to-morrow, for I am in great want of rest?" "Your accommodation," said he, "will be poor, but you will meet with a hearty welcome." I went along with him, and found bread and milk for my guide, and for myself a good bed of fresh straw, with toast and water for supper. I had occasion for nothing else, being still in a very strong fever.

On waking next day (for I had slept some hours), I found that this village contained a parish church. It was Assumption Day, and, though very ill, I wished to go to mass. In this church a young abbé was an object of attention. The curate observed me, and, when mass was over, invited me to come into the vestry. "Is it possible," said he, on hearing my story, "that, in a village where I am, a member of the Church has slept upon straw?" He took me home with him; and never was hospitality more cordially nor more generously practised. I was weakened by fasting and the fatigue of travelling. He wished to strengthen me; and, being convinced that the fever was in the blood only, not in the humours, he alleged that a copious supply of fresh and good chyle would be the most effectual remedy. Nor was he mistaken. I dined with him and never ate so excellent a soup. It was made by his niece. This niece was just eighteen, and resembled the virgins drawn by Raphael and Correggio. She was my nurse while the curate was saying vespers at church; nor, amid all my sickness, was I insensible to her care. "My uncle," said she, "will not let you set out in your present state. He says it is six long leagues from this to Bort, and that your strength must be recruited before you attempt travelling. And then, why should you be in such haste? Are you not very well here? You shall have a good bed; I will make it myself. I will bring you soups, or, if you prefer it, warm milk taken from a goat with my own hand. You come to us pale, and we must absolutely send you away blooming like a rose." "Ah! mademoiselle," said I, "it would be most agreeable to me to continue with you till my health was quite restored; but if you knew in what distress my mother is on my account, how impatient she is to see me, and how impatient I myself must be to throw myself into her arms!" "The more you love each other," said she, "the more ought you to save her from the affliction of seeing you in this condition. A sister has more courage, and here I am, as it were, your sister." "Anyone would believe so," said I, "who saw the tender care you are taking of me." "Yes," said she, "we do certainly feel an interest in you. My uncle and I are compassionate to everyone, but we seldom meet with such patients as you." The curate came back from the church. He insisted on my sending back the horse and guide, and took upon himself the whole charge of conveying me home.

Had my mind been at ease I should have found this an enchanting residence, like that of Rinaldo in the Palace of Armida—for the simple Marcelline was an Armida to me, and her innocence made her only the more dangerous. But, though my mother would already be undeceived by my two letters, nothing could have kept me at a distance from her beyond the day when, feeling the violence of my fever abated and myself a little recruited by two nights of sound sleep, I was able to mount on horseback.

My sister (for Marcelline had taken this name, and I even used it when we were by ourselves) did not view my departure without an affliction, which she was unable to conceal. "Adieu, M. l'Abbé," said she, before her uncle; "take care of your health; do not forget us. Give your mother a kiss for me; tell her I love her dearly." At these words tears welled into her eyes, and as she retired to conceal them, the curate said: "You see she is affected by the name of mother: it is not long since she lost her own. Adieu, sir. I join with her in saying 'Do not forget us.' We will often talk of you."

I found my mother perfectly at ease with respect to my conduct, but my sickly appearance alarmed her. I relieved her anxiety, for, indeed, I found myself much better from the regimen on which the curate had put me. We both wrote to thank him for his kind hospitality, and, by return of the horse on which I had come, we sent a few slight presents, among which my mother slipped in for Marcelline a little piece of dress, which, though simple and cheap, was elegant and in good taste. After which, my health hourly improving, we were both entirely occupied in arranging my plans of life.

The patronage of the bishop, his recommendation and the prospect of advancement which it offered, appeared to my mother to be everything that could be wished, and I was then myself of the same opinion. My stars, and I may now say, my happy stars, changed my design. In order to describe how this happened I must again recur to what is past.

I have reason to believe that, after the examination by the head master at Clermont, the Jesuits had cast their eyes on me. Two of my schoolfellows, who had particularly distinguished themselves, were already caught in their nets. They wished, perhaps, to draw me in also; and a curious occurrence, which I still remember, convinces me that they had at least some thoughts of it.

During the short intervals of leisure which I enjoyed at Clermont, I used to amuse myself with drawing; and, having a taste for it, I was supposed also to have some skill. I had a correct eye and a steady hand, nothing more was necessary for the purpose which one day induced the rector to send for me. "My boy," said he, "I understand you amuse yourself with drawing architectural plans. I have chosen you to make one of our school; examine the building well, and, after having exactly laid down the ground plan, sketch out its elevation. Pay the greatest attention to it, for your performance will be laid before His Majesty."

Exceedingly proud of this commission, I began to execute it, and bestowed on it, as you may believe, the most scrupulous attention. But, from being too anxious do it well, I did it exceedingly ill. One of the wings of the building had a story which the other wing had not. I was shocked with this inequality, and corrected it by raising one wing as high as the other. "Oh, child!" said the rector, "what have you done?" "Father," said I, "I have made the building regular." "The very thing you ought not to have done. The intention of this drawing is to show the contrary, first to the father confessor, and through him to the minister and the King himself. For our object is to obtain a grant from the Crown to erect the story which is wanting in one of the two wings." I proceeded instantly to correct my mistake, and when the rector was satisfied, I said: "Will you allow me, father to make one observation? The school which has been built for you is handsome, but there is no church attached to it." "Your observation," said he, "is very just, but you must have remarked also that we have no garden." "I have been surprised at that also." "Be not uneasy; we shall have both." "How so, Father? I see no vacant space." "What! do you not see, beyond the wall that encloses our school, that church belonging to the Augustine Fathers, and that garden attached to their convent?" "Well, Father?" "Well, that garden, that church shall be ours. Providence, seems, with this express view, to have placed them so near us." "But, Father, are the Augustines no longer to have either garden or church?" "On the contrary, they will have a handsomer church, and a still larger garden. God forbid we should do them any injury. While we dislodge we will also indemnify them." "So you are to dislodge the Augustine Fathers?" "Yes, child; and their house will be an infirmary, an hospital for our old men." "Nothing, certainly, can be more just; but I am only thinking where you are to accommodate the Augustine Fathers." "Be not at all uneasy upon that head; they will have the convent, the church and the garden of the Cordeliers. Won't they be much better and more comfortable there than here?" "Very well; but what becomes of the Cordeliers?" "I foresaw your objection, and am prepared to answer it. Clermont and Mont-Ferrand were formerly two cities, now they compose only one; and Mont-Ferrand is only a suburb of Clermont, thus we say Clermont-Ferrand. Now, at Mont-Ferrand, you know, the Cordeliers have a magnificent convent; and you may well suppose that there is no occasion for a city to have two convents of Cordeliers. Thus, by transporting those of Clermont to Mont-Ferrand, we do no harm to anyone; so that here, without injury to one of our brethren, we are in possession of the church, the garden, and the convent of these worthy Augustine Fathers, who will think themselves much obliged by the exchange; for we must always behave to each other like good neighbours. To conclude, my child, what I am now telling you is a secret within the society; but you are not an alien from it, and I take pleasure even now in considering you as one of ourselves."

Such, so far as I recollect, was this dialogue, which Blaise Pascal would have found a good subject for ridicule, but which appeared to me quite sincere and natural. From it, however, I now infer that it was not without preconcerted design that Father Noaillac, professor of rhetoric at Clermont, as he was passing through Bort on his way to Toulouse, came to dine with me.

My mother, who had no suspicion any more than I of what was his object, received him in the best manner she could; and during dinner he made her happy by giving an extravagant account of my success in the art of teaching. According to him, my scholars were so distinguished in their classes, that it was easy, on reading the different exercises, to recognise those who were under my charge. There appeared to me to be too much flattery in all this, but I did not see its aim.

Towards the close of dinner, my mother having, according to the custom of the country, left us alone at table, my Jesuit found himself at his ease. "Now," said he, "let us talk of your plans. What is your intention? what pursuit do you mean to enter upon?" I disclosed to him the offers made by the bishop, of which, I said, my mother and I intended to avail ourselves. After listening with a thoughtful and contemptuous air, he said: "I know not in what respect these offers appear to you flattering and seductive; for my part, I think them quite unworthy of you. In the first place, the title of Doctor of Bourges is fallen into such discredit as to be quite ridiculous—this degree, instead of raising your character, would lower it. Then—but this is a subject too delicate to be mentioned. There are truths which must not be told, unless to an intimate friend; nor am I entitled to explain myself so freely with you." This artful reserve had all the effect that he expected. "Explain yourself, Father," said I; "and be assured that I shall feel grateful to you for having opened your heart to me." "Well," said he, "you will have it so; and, indeed, I feel that, at so critical a period, it would be wrong in me to disguise my opinion upon an affair where you appear to have no certainty of meeting with anything except mortifications." "Mortifications!" exclaimed I with astonishment, "what mortifications?"

"Your bishop," continued he, "is the best man in the world. I am convinced of the goodness of his intention, and that he wishes nothing but your good. But how can he think he is serving anyone by making him a humble dependent on this Archbishop of Bourges? During the five years that you attend theology you will receive a pension from him; you will be supported by his benevolence. I am willing also to believe that he will afford your family some charitable aid. (My blood froze at this expression.) But ought you and your mother to be on his poor list? Are you reduced so low as that?" "Most assuredly not," exclaimed I. "Yet this, for a long time, is all the offer made to you, all the hope that is held out." "I understood," said I, "that the Church has funds, the employment of which is entrusted to the bishops, and which they dispose of, but have no right to turn to their own use; so that these funds may be received from them with as little disgrace as a benefice." "Ay, ay," said he, "that is just the lure which they throw out to the ambition of young persons. But when will these advantages come, and how dear will they cost? You know not the spirit of despotism in which these dilatory benefactors tyrannise over those who are under their protection. Their great fear is, lest they should escape, and they lengthen, as much as possible, the state of dependence and subjection in which they keep these poor creatures. They bestow their favours with ease and liberality upon interest and birth; but if any favour is ever extended to unfortunate merit, it is dearly purchased." "This," said I, "is showing me many thorns and briars where I saw only flowers. But consider my situation, loaded with a family which I am bound to support, and which stands in need of my aid, and say what you would advise me to do." "I advise you," said he, "to choose a situation where you may protect yourself, and not depend on the protection of others. I know a profession in which every man who distinguishes himself, possesses credit and powerful friends. That profession is mine. All the avenues of fortune and ambition are shut against us as individuals, but they are open to all in whom we are interested." "You advise me, then, to become a Jesuit?" "Yes, undoubtedly; and by means with which we are acquainted, your mother will be rendered comfortable; her children will be educated—the State itself will provide for them—and when they arrive at manhood, the extent of our connections will enable us to provide for them with the utmost facility. For this reason the flower of the youth educated in our seminaries aspire to and solicit the advantage of being received into this powerful society, and, for the same reason, the heads of the greatest families wish to be connected with it." "I have always," said I, "regarded your society as a fountain of instruction, and have said a hundred times that a man who wishes to acquire information and to cultivate his talents, cannot do better than spend his life with you. But there are two things in your regulations to which I am averse: the length of the novitiate, and the obligation to begin by teaching the lower classes." "As to the novitiate," said he, "the law is invariable; you must undergo two years of probation. But, with regard to the lower classes, I think I can answer for your being exempted from that duty." The wine which we drank during this conversation happened to be very heady. The Jesuit's brain got heated; he expatiated loudly on the respect which his society enjoyed, and the lustre which was thence reflected on its members. "Nothing," said he, "can be compared to the pleasures which a Jesuit, who is a man of merit, enjoys in the world; every door is open to him; he is everywhere secure of the most favourable, the most flattering reception."

"I am now determined," said I, "to decline with thanks the bishop's proposal. The other subject demands a little longer reflection. But I propose going to Toulouse; and there, if my mother agree, I will follow the remaining part of your advice."

I communicated to my mother the observations of the Jesuit on the unpleasant circumstance of going to Bourges to depend on the archbishop's charity. She felt the same degree of delicacy and pride, and this spirit dictated the two letters we wrote to the bishop. I had now only to consult her on the plan of becoming a Jesuit; but I never could summon the requisite degree of courage. Her strength and my own were alike unequal to this consultation; it was only at a distance from each other that we could reason coolly. I reserved it as the subject of a letter from Toulouse; so that I arrived there still undecided as to what part I should take.

Shall I say that, on the road, I again missed an opportunity of making my fortune? An Aurillac muleteer, who passed his life on the road from Clermont to Toulouse, undertook to convey me. I rode on one of his mules, while he, most commonly on foot, travelled by my side. "M. l'Abbé," said he, "you will be obliged to spend some days at my house, where business detains me. For God's sake, devote this time to curing my daughter of her silly devotion. I have no other child, and by no entreaties can I get her to marry; her obstinacy distracts me." The commission was delicate; but I thought it amusing, and willingly undertook it.

I had certainly formed a very humble idea of that man's dwelling, who was constantly trotting after his mules over the roughest roads, with his body sometimes drenched with rain, sometimes covered with snow. I was, therefore, not a little surprised, on entering, to see a convenient, well-furnished and remarkably neat house; while a kind of nun, clad in grey, young, fresh and handsome, came to meet Peter (for this was the muleteer's name), and addressed him by the name of father. The supper which she served had no less the appearance of easy circumstances. The room they gave me, though simple, was elegant almost to luxury. Never till then had I so soft a bed. Before falling asleep I reflected on what I had seen. "Can this man," said I to myself, "harass and wear out his life in such hard labour only to spend a few hours of it at his ease? No! he is labouring to secure a quiet and peaceful old age, and the pleasure with which he looks forward to that period soothes him under his fatigues. But what caprice can have induced this only daughter, whom he tenderly loves, and who is really young and handsome, to put on the dress of a nun. Why this grey-coloured gown, this unplaited linen, this cross of gold on her breast and nunlike handkerchief on her bosom? Yet the hair which she conceals under a fillet is of a handsome colour; the little that can be seen of her neck is white as ivory; her arms are of the same pure ivory, and handsomely rounded." Amid these thoughts I fell asleep. Next day I had the pleasure of breakfasting with the fair nun. She obligingly inquired how I had slept. "Agreeably," said I, "but not quietly; I have dreamt a great deal. But how have you slept, mademoiselle?" "Not amiss, thank heaven," said she. "Have you dreamt, too?" She blushed, and answered that she very seldom dreamt. "And when you do dream, it is of angels?" "Of martyrs, sometimes," said she, smiling. "Of those, doubtless, whose martyrdom is on your account?" "My account! there is no one a martyr on my account." "I am certain there is more than one, though you do not choose to boast of it. For my part, when the heavens open to me in my dreams, I scarce ever see anything but virgins. Some are in white; others in a vest and petticoat of grey cloth, which becomes them better than the richest ornament. No part of this simple attire disguises the natural beauty of their hair and complexion; no fold injures their figure; a gown fitted close to their shape displays and delineates its roundness. A lily arm and a pretty hand, with its rosy fingers, appear, as Nature made them, from under a plain, unadorned sleeve; and what the handkerchief conceals, fancy can easily supply. But, however agreeable it is to see all these young ladies in heaven, I must own myself a little afflicted by the place that is assigned them." "What place is that?" asked she, with embarrassment. "Alas! almost alone in a corner; and, what I dislike still more, close to the Capuchin Fathers." "To the Capuchin Fathers!" exclaimed she, knitting her brows. "Yes, indeed, left almost desolate; while the respectable matrons, encircled by the children whom they have educated, by the husbands whom they have already made happy on earth, by the relations whom they have comforted, amused and supported in their old age, hold a distinguished station and shine with glory in the view of all heaven." "Well," asked she, with a satirical look, "where are the abbés stationed?" "If there are any," replied I, "they will, perhaps, have stuck them up in some corner at a distance from the virgins." "I believe so," said she; "and they will have acted very prudently, for they would be dangerous neighbours."

This dispute about our professions diverted honest Peter. Never had he seen his daughter so lively and talkative; for I took care, as Montaigne would have said, to throw into my argument a seasoning (sweet mingled with sour) of half-provoking, half-flattering gaiety, with which she pretended to be angry, but was in reality very well pleased. At last her father, the evening before we were to set out for Toulouse, took me alone into his room, and said: "M. l'Abbé, I see clearly that you and my daughter will never agree, unless I interfere. Yet there must be an end to this quarrel about your professions of nun and abbé. This may be easily brought about if you will only throw away your band and she her round collar; now I have some suspicion that, if you wish it, the difficulty on her part would not be great. For myself, as for ten years in the course of my business, I executed the commissions of that honest fellow, your father, and as everyone tells me you are just such another, I will deal frankly and cordially with you." He then opened the drawers of his bureau and showed me heaps of crown pieces. "See," said he, "one word may do the business. See what I have collected, and am still collecting, for my grandchildren, if my daughter presents me with any; and for your children, too, if you give your consent and can procure hers."

I certainly was somewhat tempted by the sight of this treasure. The offer was the more inviting as honest Peter attached to it no other condition than that of making his daughter happy. "I will continue," said he, "to drive my mules; every journey I make will enlarge this heap of crowns which you are to enjoy. The life I delight in is one of labour and fatigue. I will continue it as long as I have health and strength; and when old age shall bend my back and stiffen my limbs, I will come and end my life quietly with you." "Ah, my good Peter," said I, "who can deserve better than you the repose of a long and happy old age? But how can you think of marrying your daughter to a man who has five children already?" "You, sir, at your age, have five children?" "I have indeed. Have I not two sisters and three brothers, who look up to me as their only father? It is my income, and not yours, that ought to support them; it is my duty to labour for their subsistence." "Do you think," said Peter, "you will make as much by your Latin as I by my mules?" "I hope so," said I; "at least, I will do everything in my power." "So, then, you won't have my nun; and yet she is handsome, especially now that you have given her more animation." "Certainly," said I, "she is both handsome and agreeable; she would tempt me more than your crowns. But I repeat it: Nature has already thrown five children into my arms. Marriage would soon give me five others, perhaps more; for devout ladies have commonly a great many. This would be too great a load upon me." "I am sorry for it," said he; "then my daughter will not marry at all." "I think you may be assured," said I, "that she feels no longer such an aversion to marriage. I have taught her that in heaven worthy matrons rank greatly above virgins, and, provided you choose a husband she likes, you will find her easily converted to this new kind of devotion." My prophecy was fulfilled.

As soon as I arrived at Toulouse, I called on Father Noaillac. "Your affair is far advanced," said he; "I found several Jesuits here who know you, and who have joined their votes to mine. Your admission has been proposed and agreed to; you enter, if you please, to-morrow. The provincial expects you." I was somewhat surprised at his making such haste; but, without complaining, I let myself be conducted to him. I found him, accordingly, ready to receive me as soon as I thought proper, provided, as he said, my vocation was sincere and determined. I replied that before quitting my mother I had not courage to declare my resolution to her, and could not proceed farther without asking her advice and consent. I must, therefore, have time to write and receive her answer.

The answer was not long in arriving, but, O God! what an answer, what language, what eloquence! None of the illusions with which Father Noaillac had flattered my imagination made the least impression on my mother's mind. She saw nothing but the absolute dependence, the profound devotion, the blind obedience to which her son would bind himself the moment he assumed the dress of a Jesuit. "And how," said she, "can I believe that you will still be mine? You will no longer be your own. What hope for my children can I repose on him, whose whole being is every moment at the disposal of a stranger? I am told, nay, assured, that if, by the caprice of your superiors, you are appointed to go to India, to China, or Japan, if the head of the society sends you thither, you must not even hesitate; without reply and without resistance you must set out immediately. What! my son, has God, then, made you a free being; has He given you a sound understanding, a good heart, a feeling soul; has He endowed you with a disposition naturally so upright and just, with those inclinations which constitute the man of virtue, only to reduce you to the state of a passive machine? Ah! be persuaded by me; leave vows, leave inflexible rules to souls which feel themselves in need of restraint. I, who know you well, can confidently assure you that the more free yours shall be, the more certainly will it prompt to nothing that is not honourable and praiseworthy. O my dear son! recollect that dreadful moment, the remembrance of which, however agonising, is yet dear to my memory, that moment when, amid a family overwhelmed with affliction, God gave you strength to revive its hopes by declaring yourself its support. Will you improve, by enslaving it, a heart which Nature has rendered capable of such emotions? And when you shall have resigned the power of indulging them, when you shall be no longer master of any part of yourself, what will become of those virtuous resolutions never to abandon your brothers, your sisters, and your mother? You are lost to them; they can have no longer any hope from you. My children, your second father is about to die to the world and to Nature. I, a hopeless mother, will weep for him, will weep for you whom he has abandoned. O God! this is what, in my own house, but without my knowledge, you and that perfidious Jesuit were planning. He came to deprive a poor widow of her son and five orphans of their father. Cruel, merciless man; with what treacherous kindness he flattered me! Such, I am told, is their genius and their character. But you, my son, who never had a secret from me, you also deceived me! He has, then, taught you dissimulation; and this has been your first use of his lessons. Your noble and generous motive for rejecting the aid of a bishop was only an idle pretence to divert me from my wishes and to disguise your own. No, you cannot be the real author of all this. I would rather believe that some phantom has deluded your senses. I will not cease to esteem and to love my son—these sentiments are dearer to me than life itself. My son has been intoxicated with ambitious hopes. He thought he was sacrificing himself for me and for my children. His young mind was weak, but his heart will always be good. He will not read this letter, bathed in his mother's tears, without detesting the perfidious counsel which has led him, for a moment, astray."

Yes, my mother was indeed in the right. I could not finish the perusal of this letter without being nearly suffocated by tears and sobs. From that moment all idea of becoming a Jesuit was banished from my mind, and I made haste to inform the provincial of this resolution. He did not disapprove of my respect for maternal authority; but was pleased to express some regret on my own account, and said that, in consideration of my good intentions, the society would always regard me with a favourable eye. Accordingly, I found the masters of this school, like those at Clermont, well disposed to give me scholars of every class. But my ambition now was to teach a philosophical school, and I busied myself in the attainment of this object.

My age was always the first obstacle to my views. Having begun my graduation by the study of philosophy, I thought myself at least capable of teaching its elements; but scarcely any of my scholars were younger than myself. In this great difficulty, I consulted an old tutor of the name of Morin, the most distinguished in that capacity of any in the colleges. He conversed with me a long time, and judged me sufficiently qualified. But how could grown-up men be expected to come to my class? Yet an idea struck him, and drew his attention. "It would be exceedingly good," said he, laughing to himself. "Well, no matter, I shall make the attempt; perhaps it may succeed." I was curious to know what this idea might be. "The Bernardines," said he, "have in this place a kind of seminary, to which they send their young people from all quarters to complete their studies. The professor of philosophy has been taken ill, and they have asked me to supply his place in the meantime. As my other engagements do not admit of my performing this office, they wish me to recommend one; I will propose you."

I was accepted on his recommendation. But, when he introduced me next day, I saw clearly the ridiculous effect of the contrast between my age and my functions. Almost the whole school had a beard, except the master. Perceiving a smile, somewhat mixed with disdain, to which my presence gave rise, I met it with a cool and modest, but dignified air; and, while Morin was talking with the superiors, I enquired of the young people what were the regulations of their house concerning the period of study and the hour of meeting. I pointed out some books with which they should supply themselves, in order that their private and public studies might correspond. I took care that my manner of addressing them should be neither too youthful nor too familiar; so that, towards the end of the conversation, I found them regarding me with a serious attention, instead of the light tone and jeering air which they had assumed at the beginning.

The result of the conference which Morin held with the superiors was that, next morning, I should deliver my first lecture.

I was provoked by the insulting smile with which I had been met on my first introduction to these monks. I was eager to avenge it, and contrived to do so in the following manner: It is customary, on the opening of a course of philosophical lectures, to dictate a kind of preliminary discourse, which forms, as it were, the porch of that temple to which the disciples of wisdom are introduced; it ought, therefore, to combine some degree of dignity and elegance. I bestowed great pains on this piece of composition. I got it by heart. In the same manner I composed, and got by heart, an outline of the subjects of which I was to treat. Full of my plan, I then gravely and proudly ascended the professor's chair. The young Bernardines seated themselves round me, while their superiors, impatient to hear me, stood leaning on the back of their seats. I enquired if they were ready to write what I should dictate. They answered, "Yes." Then, crossing my arms, without any paper before me, as if speaking extempore, I dictated, first, my introduction, and then the division of my course of philosophy, pointing out, as I went on, the principal roads and the chief points of elevation.

I cannot recollect, without laughing, the amazed look of the Bernardines, and the profound respect with which I was received by them on coming down from the chair. I had succeeded too well in this first attempt, not to continue to support the character I had assumed. Every day, therefore, I studied the lecture I was to deliver, and, though dictating from memory, appeared only to pronounce what I composed on the spot. Some time after, when Morin called on them, they talked of me with the same astonishment as if I had been a prodigy. They showed him the notes that had been taken of my lectures; and, when he was pleased to express to me his surprise, that such composition should be dictated extempore, I answered, in the words of Horace, that to a man who had clear ideas, and was master of his subject, words came spontaneously.

Thus, among Gascons, I began by a gasconade—but there was a necessity for it; and the consequence was, that when the Bernardine professor came to take his place, Morin, who had the offer of more scholars than he could attend to, gave me as many as I chose. In another quarter, too, fortune was propitious beyond expectation.

There was an institution at Toulouse, called the College of St. Catharine, founded for students from the province of Limosin. Those who were received into it had lodging free, and received, besides, two hundred livres per annum during the five years of graduation. When a vacancy occurred, the incumbents filled it up by ballot, which was certainly a good and wise regulation. On one of these occasions my young countrymen were attentive enough to think of me. In this college, where liberty was unrestrained, provided it did not transgress the bounds, everyone lived as he chose. The porter and cook were paid at our common expense. Thus, by means of economy, I was able to transmit to my family the greater part of what my industry produced; and this remittance increasing every year, as my school became more numerous, was at length almost sufficient to place them in easy circumstances. But while Fortune thus favoured me with the sweetest enjoyments, Nature was preparing the most heart-rending affliction.

Yet I had still some interval of prosperity. Accidentally turning over a collection of pieces crowned by the Academy of Floral Games, I was struck by the splendid prizes, consisting of gold and silver flowers, which that academy distributed. I was not quite so much dazzled by the beauty of the pieces which had obtained these prizes. It appeared to me easy enough to make something better. I thought of the pleasure of sending my mother these nosegays of gold and silver, and how happy it would make her to receive them from me. From this moment I was seized with the wish and design of becoming a poet. But I had not studied the rules of our poetry. I instantly went, therefore, and got a little book which taught these rules, and, by the advice of the bookseller, I at the same time purchased a copy of the "Odes of Rousseau." I perused and dwelt on them both, and presently began to ransack my brain in search of some good subject for an ode. I fixed upon "The Invention of Gunpowder." I remember it began thus:

"Toi qu'une infernale Eumenide
Petrit de ses sanglantes mains."[1]

I was lost in astonishment at having composed so beautiful an ode. Intoxicated with the most enthusiastic self-love, I sent it to the academy without the least doubt of its gaining the prize. It did not gain it, nor had I even the consolation of obtaining the second prize. I was enraged; and, prompted by indignation, I wrote to Voltaire, and sent him my work, calling for vengeance. It is well known how kindly Voltaire used to treat young men who discovered any talent for poetry. The French Parnassus was, as it were, an empire, whose sceptre he would not have yielded to any man living, but whose subjects he delighted to see multiplying. He sent me one of those answers of which he was so liberal, and which he wrote so gracefully. The praises he bestowed on my work afforded ample consolation for what I called the injustice of the academy, whose judgment, against that of Voltaire, I conceived did not weigh a grain in the balance. But there was another attention, which flattered me still more than his letter, and that was his presenting me with a copy of his works, corrected by his own hand. I was intoxicated with pride and delight, and ran over the city and colleges, showing everyone this present. Such was the beginning of my correspondence with this illustrious man, and of that friendly and unalterable union which, for the thirty-five years of his remaining life, continued to subsist between us. I continued to compose for the Academy of Floral Games, and gained prizes every year. But the last of these little literary triumphs was rendered interesting to me by a motive more rational and impressive than that of vanity. The scene deserves a place in the memoirs which I transmit to my children.

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[1] "Thou whom an infernal Fury fashioned with her bloody hands."

As men estimate every object only by comparison, the good people at Toulouse had no idea of any literary success more brilliant than that which was obtained at the Academy of Floral Games. The public assembly held by this academy for the distribution of prizes, had, therefore, all the splendour and crowded attendance usual at a great solemnity. Three deputies from the Parliament presided; the chief magistrates and the whole corporation of the city, were present in their robes. The hall, in the form of an amphitheatre, was filled with all the men of fashion and the fine women in the city; the young students of the university filled the pit around the academic circle. The hall was very extensive, and adorned with festoons of flowers and laurel; while the moment a prize was decreed, the trumpets made the city echo with the triumphant sound of victory.

I had, this year, offered five pieces to the academy: an ode, two poems, and two idyls. The ode failed of the prize; it was not given at all. The two poems were more successful; one received the prize for epic poetry, the other received one for prose composition, which happened to be vacant. One of the two idyls obtained the first prize for pastoral poetry; the other obtained the second. Thus the only three prizes which the academy was to distribute were assigned to me. I went to the assembly with transports of vanity, which I never could recollect since without confusion, and without pitying the follies of my youth. The affair was still worse when I was loaded with my flowers and my crowns. But where is the poet who, at twenty years of age, would not have had his head turned by such an event?

Silence was imposed throughout the hall. Then followed the never-failing panegyric upon Clemence

Isaure, the lady who founded the floral games, which is pronounced every year at the foot of her statue; after that came the distribution of the prizes. We were first informed that the prize for the ode was withheld. Now, it was known that I had offered an ode to the academy, and also that I was the author of an idyl, which had not been crowned. They pitied me, and I readily allowed them to do so. Then the poem which had gained the prize was named aloud; and, on hearing these words: "Let the author come forward," I rose, approached and received the prize. The usual applause followed; and those about me began to say: "He has missed two, but not the third; he has more than one string to his bow." I returned modestly to my seat, amid the sound of trumpets. But soon the second poem was named, on which the academy, we were told, had thought fit to bestow the prize of eloquence, rather than to withhold it altogether. The author was called upon, and I again rose; the applause redoubled, and this poem was listened to with the same favour and complacency as the first. I had returned to my place, when the idyl was proclaimed, and the author invited to come for his prize. The assembly saw me rise for the third time; then, if I had composed "Cinna," "Athalia," and "Zara," the applause could not have been louder. Their minds were raised to the highest enthusiasm. The men carried me through the crowd in their arms; the women kissed me. O Glory! this indeed teaches me that thou art but an empty shadow. Forty years after, I read over these essays, then thought so brilliant, and, though disposed to view them with indulgence, I did not find one which appeared to deserve a place in the collection of my works. But, on this day so flattering for me, there occurred one circumstance, which, as it still sensibly affects me, I will now relate.

Amid the tumult and noise of an admiring people, two long arms were opened and extended towards me.

I turned, and saw my master in the third class, the worthy Father Malosse, whom I had not met for more than eight years. I rushed forward, forced my way through the crowd, and, throwing myself into his arms, held out my three prizes. "They are yours, Father," said I, "it is to you that I owe them." The eyes of the worthy Jesuit were filled with tears, as he raised them to heaven; and the pleasure which he thus felt, afforded me a more sensible satisfaction than even the splendour of my triumph. Ah! my children, that which interests the heart and the soul is always sweet; it affords pleasure through the whole course of life. The vanity of being admired for wit and talents is remembered only like a vain dream, whose delusions we blush at having too fondly cherished.

These literary amusements, though very attractive, did not at all encroach on my serious employments. I spent my walks and leisure hours in composing verses, but, at the same time, steadily attended to my studies, and those of my class. Having in vain endeavoured, during my second year of philosophy, to prevail on the Jesuit professor to teach us the Newtonian system, I resolved to go and study it under the Doctrinaires. Their college, called l'Esquille, had two philosophical professors, who were both men of merit; but one of these, with whom I studied, was indeed intelligent and well informed; yet, either from character, or from weakness of constitution, he was too much inclined to indolence and repose. He found it convenient to have a pupil who, having already studied philosophy, could occasionally relieve him from the fatigue of teaching his class.

"Come up to the chair," said he, "and explain to them what you yourself understand so readily." This panegyric was a full compensation for the trouble I took, for it procured me the confidence of the scholars, and made them wish to have me for their private tutor, which afforded a sure and excellent source of emolument.

Out of complaisance to the professor, I was obliged, though rather unwillingly, to maintain general disputations. He was very anxious to have me among those of his scholars who were to make a public appearance, and, being a member of the Academy of Sciences at Toulouse, he wished my thesis to be dedicated to this academy. "A thesis, pronounced in their presence, will form," he said, "a very new and striking spectacle." He wished thus to close his philosophical career, and resolved to increase the pomp of this spectacle by a step which might be at once honourable and surprising to me. He succeeded but too well; and my surprise was such, that it had nearly rendered me an idiot or a madman for life.

In these public exercises it was a constant practice for the professor to be in his chair and his scholar before him, upon a desk immediately below the chair. When all the company were seated, and the illustrious Academy placed before the chair, I was informed, and made my appearance. You may well suppose that I had prepared a compliment to the academy, and that all the moderate degree of skill and ability which I possessed had been employed in this little harangue. I knew it by heart, had repeated it twenty times without the least hesitation, and thought myself so sure of remembering it that I had neglected to bring the manuscript. Well, I appeared; but, instead of finding the professor in his chair, I saw him seated among the other academicians. I made him a respectful sign to come to his place. "Go up, sir," said he aloud, with a calm and indolent air; "go up, either to the desk or the chair, as you please. You have no need of my assistance." This magnificent testimony in my favour excited in the assembly a murmur of surprise, and, I believe, of approbation; but, upon me, it had the effect of freezing my senses and disordering my brain. Trembling with astonishment, I mounted the steps of the desk and, as usual, threw myself on my knees, as if to implore the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Before rising, however, I endeavoured to recall the words with which my compliment was to begin. I had no recollection of them. The end of the thread was lost. In vain did I search for it through my brain; nothing appeared but an impenetrable mist. Inconceivable were the efforts I made to find at least the first word of my discourse. Not a word, not an idea came. I continued several minutes in this agonising condition, covered with a cold sweat and having the veins and nerves of my head almost burst by this laborious and terrible struggle. Yet, on a sudden, as if by a miracle, the cloud in which my mind was involved dispersed; my ideas rose anew. Though exceedingly fatigued, I was now free from anxiety, and, having got hold of the thread of my discourse, I delivered it. I shall not speak of the success which it met with. Praise seldom meets with a bad reception, and I had seasoned this as well as I could. Neither shall I boast of the favour which supported me through the whole of this exercise. Such of the academicians as deigned to enter the lists with me, while they introduced the most important questions in physical science, studiously afforded me an opportunity of making brilliant answers. They acted like true patrons of literature, full of kindness and indulgence. But the circumstance which struck and affected me most was the generous conduct of the Jesuit professor, whom I had quitted too rashly, for the purpose of removing to l'Esquille. My answers were, fortunately, such as gave him to understand that I perceived his mode of arguing to be that of a master who calls forth the strength of his pupil, without wishing to overwhelm him. When I came down from the desk, the President of the Academy congratulated me and said that that learned body could not better express its satisfaction than by offering me a place among its members, which happened to be then vacant. I accepted it with humble acknowledgments and, amid public applause, received the reward of my disputation.

But the solid advantage which I derived from this youthful success consisted in the additional number of scholars whom it attracted to my school, which enabled me to transmit more assistance to Bort. The wealth which I derived from my industry was now such as enabled me to educate my second brother. I invited him to Toulouse. He was fourteen years old, and did not know a word of Latin; but his conception was very clear, his memory excellent, and he was eagerly desirous to profit by my instructions. I simplified the rules and shortened the method of study, so that in six months he was complete master of syntax; and, after having been very busy for a year, he was able to go on without a master. This he was most ambitious to do, for he saw me overwhelmed with labour, and regarded all the trouble that he could save me as if it had been a relief to himself. Poor fellow! the attachment he felt for me was not friendship only—it was adoration. The name of brother, in his mouth, had a sacred character. He expressed a desire to enter into the Church, with which I was very well satisfied; for my own desire of following this profession was cooled by different causes, particularly by the thorny and revolting difficulties which were attempted to be thrown in my way.

The inspector and spiritual superintendent of the College of St. Catharine, in which I had a place, was one Goutelongue, a proctor of the archbishop—a bold and intriguing fellow, who was even said to be a little of a knave. His object was to manage the college according to his own inclination, and to fill up the vacant places with whoever he thought fit. By his situation as proctor, by the authority of the archbishop (which he was always talking of), and by the credit which he boasted of having with his lordship, he had intimidated some and gained others, so as to form among our companions a party whom fear and hope rendered his creatures. But there was in the college one Pujalou, a young man of a frank, independent and determined character, who, wearied of his tyranny, dared to make head against him, and to raise the standard of rebellion against this usurped authority. "What right," said he to his young Limosin companions, "has this man to form intrigues in our assemblies, and to embarrass our elections? The founder of this college, when he allowed us the privilege of electing to the vacant places, wisely judged that youth was the age when the heart is naturally most candid, just and upright. Why, then, shall we allow him to corrupt this equitable sentiment by which we are animated. With us, the vacant scholarships are bestowed on those who are most worthy, not on those who have the highest interest. If Goutelongue will have creatures, let him gain them by the favours of his archbishop; but let him not gratify them at our expense. Our choice ought to be guided by our own conscience, which is at least as sound as that of the proctor. But I know him, and declare myself to have less faith in his honesty than in that of a horse-jockey." This last stroke, though not in the highest style of eloquence, was that which carried the day. The proctor kept ever after his title of "jockey," and his intrigues in the college were likened to the dealings of that craft.

Such was the state of things at my arrival, and Pujalou found no difficulty in gaining me to his party. From that moment I was marked down in the proctor's tablets, where an achievement of my own soon procured me a more distinguished place. A scholarship happened to fall vacant. The two parties were exactly balanced, and, in case of a division, the archbishop would have determined the election. We counted our numbers, and found ourselves sure of carrying, though only by a single vote. Now, on the evening before the election, we lost this vote. One of our companions, a well-meaning but very timid young man, suddenly disappeared; and we learned that an uncle of his, who was curate in a village at three leagues' distance, had come and carried him off to spend the Christmas vacation. We had no doubt that this was a stratagem of Goutelongue. The village, and the road to it, were well known; but it was dark, rain was falling, mixed with snow and hail, and it seemed absurd to suppose that the curate would allow his nephew to set out in such a night, particularly when he had himself carried him away out of regard to the proctor. "Well," said I, on a sudden, "no matter; I engage to get hold of him and bring him along with me. Give me a good horse." I had one instantly, and, muffled up in Pujalou's long cloak, arrived, in two hours, at the door of the parsonage-house. The curate, his nephew and his servant, were just going to bed. My companion, when he saw me dismount, came to meet me. I saluted him, saying: "Be courageous, or you are disgraced for ever." The curate, to whom I introduced myself as belonging to the College of St. Catharine, asked what was my business. "I come," said I, "in the name of Jesus Christ, the common Father of the poor. I conjure you not to become an accomplice of their enemy, of that unjust and cruel man, who deprives them of their substance, and squanders it for his own pleasure." I then disclosed to him the intrigues of Goutelongue, by which he sought to usurp the right of supplying vacancies and bestowing them on his own creatures. "To-morrow," said I, "we are to elect either a scholar whom he patronizes, and who has no occasion for the vacant place, or a poor fellow who deserves and expects it. On which of the two do you wish the appointment to fall?" He replied that if the choice depended upon him it should not long be doubtful. "Well," said I, "it does depend on you. The poor boy wants one vote only: of this vote he thought himself assured, but, in compliance with the urgent solicitations of Goutelongue, you have taken it from him. Restore it; restore to him the bread you have snatched out of his mouth." Amazed and thunderstruck, he replied that his nephew was his own master; that he had only brought him there to spend the holidays, but had not forced him. "If," replied I, "he is his own master, let him come along with me; let him fulfil his duty; let him redeem his honour, for it is gone if he is believed to have sold himself to Goutelongue." Then, turning to the young man, and seeing him inclined to follow me: "Come," said I, "take leave of your uncle, and let the college see that neither of you is the slave of the proctor." Instantly we are both on the road, and soon lose sight of the village.

Our companions had not gone to bed; we found them at table. Judge of the transports of joy with which they saw us arrive together. I thought Pujalou would have stifled me with embraces. We were drenched to the skin. Their first care was to dry us, and then to give us as much ham, sausage and wine as we could eat or drink. In the middle of these raptures, however, I had the prudence to propose that the opposite party should be left ignorant of the occasion of our joy till the hour of meeting; and, accordingly, the sudden appearance of the deserter gave our adversaries a most overwhelming surprise. We carried the vacant place, as it were, sword in hand; but Goutelongue learned the reason, and never forgave me.

When I went, therefore, to request that the archbishop would be so good as to procure me what is called a *demissoire*, that I might take orders from him, his mind appeared to be strongly prejudiced against me. I was "just a gay abbé, quite taken up with poetry, paying my court to the ladies, and writing pastorals and songs for them; nay, sometimes, at dusk, I went to the public walks and took the air with pretty girls." This archbishop was La Roche-Aymond, a man not at all scrupulous about the morality of actions which could serve any political purpose; but he affected great strictness against sins of which he himself was innocent, and wished me to do penance for them in the most dirty and bigoted of all our seminaries. I recognised the friendly offices of Goutelongue, and my disgust for the seminary of Calvet showed me, what had hitherto been a secret to myself, that my inclination for the Church had cooled.

My connection with Voltaire, to whom I sometimes wrote, enclosing copies of my poetical attempts, and who was so good as to answer me, contributed not a little to alienate my mind from this profession.

Voltaire, holding out to me the hope of success in a poetical career, urged me to go to Paris, as the only school where a taste and capacity for that art could be formed. I answered that Paris was too great a scene for me; that I should be lost in the crowd; that, besides, having inherited no property, I should have no means of subsistence; whereas, at Toulouse, I had established myself in a respectable and comfortable livelihood. Unless, therefore, I had the certainty of nearly an equal income at Paris, I would have fortitude sufficient to resist the desire of paying homage to the great man who invited me thither.

Meanwhile, I must determine upon something. Literature at Paris, the Bar at Toulouse, or the seminary at Limoges were my three prospects, and they appeared to be all distant and uncertain. In this state of irresolution I was desirous of consulting my mother. I knew her to be in a languid state, but I did not suppose her seriously ill; and, hoping that the sight of me might restore her to health, I went to see her. What charms, what pleasures would this journey have yielded me had its effect corresponded to so dear a hope!

Having left my brother at Toulouse, and set out on a little horse which I had bought, I arrived at the hamlet of St. Thomas, where our farm was situated. It was a holiday. My eldest sister, with the daughter of my aunt d'Albois, had come there to take a walk. I rested and dressed myself, for I carried in a portmanteau behind me the whole attire of an abbé. In order to reach Bort from St. Thomas we had only to ford the river and cross a meadow. I made the two little girls pass the river on my horse, and then went over it in the same way myself. Forgive these minute particulars; remember I am writing to my children.

Vespers were saying in church as I passed by, and a little farther on I was met by Odde, an old schoolfellow, who has since married my sister. He spread through the church the news of my arrival; immediately upon which, my friends, neighbours, and, in short, the whole assembly stole out one after another. The church was left empty, and the house was soon filled and surrounded by the crowd of those who were coming to see me. Alas! I was then in the deepest affliction. I had just seen my mother; and her thinness, her cough, the burning red which coloured her cheek, appeared to me symptoms of the same illness which had proved fatal to my father. It was but too true: my mother, though not yet forty, was attacked by it. This fatal consumption was contagious in our family, in which it has made cruel ravages. I struggled as much as possible to conceal from my mother the grief with which I was seized. She was aware of her danger, but forgot, or, at least, appeared to forget it; and, at our meeting, spoke only of her joy. She insisted, as I have since learned, that the physician and my aunts should flatter and relieve me from all anxiety about her situation. They all joined with her in deceiving me, and my mind clung eagerly to the pleasing delusion of hope.

I return to our villagers. The delight which my mother felt at my academical success had been communicated to all around her. The silver flowers which I sent and with which she annually adorned the altar on the Fête Dieu, had made the village form a most astonishing idea of me. These people, whose character, perhaps, like that of many others, may since have been perverted, were then goodness itself. They vied with each other in loading me with every possible mark of friendship. The good women delighted in telling stories of my childhood; the men listened to me as if every word had been an oracle. Yet my expressions were only those of simple feeling, such as were dictated by the emotion of my heart. As everyone came congratulating my mother, Mademoiselle B—— came also with her sisters; and custom required that she should allow the new comer to embrace her; but, while the others cordially returned the innocent kiss I gave them, she shunned it by gently withdrawing her cheek. I felt this difference, and was deeply affected by it.

During the three weeks that I passed with my mother it was impossible not to steal a few short intervals from natural affection and bestow them on grateful friendship. My mother required it, and rather than deprive our friends of the pleasure of seeing me, she went herself to the little entertainments that were given on the occasion. These were dinners, to which the inhabitants mutually invited each other. There my mother was continually interested, and continually affected, by what people said to her son, and by what her son answered; she watched my very looks, and was perpetually anxious about the manner in which I was to return the attentions with which they were all besieging me. These long dinners, therefore, cost her mind a laborious effort, which was too much for an enfeebled frame. Our private conversations, being more interesting, fatigued her still more. In order to save her as much as possible from the fatigue of speaking, I either told long stories, or studiously cut short the dialogue with my reflections. But listening to me animated her as much as talking herself, and was no less hurtful to her health. I could not, without the most grievous distress, see sparkling in her eyes that fire which was consuming her blood.

At last I told her how much my ardour for the profession of the Church had cooled, and how irresolute I was with respect to the choice of another. Then, indeed, she appeared calm and spoke to me with coolness.

"The profession of the Church," said she, "imposes two essential duties—those of piety and chastity; it is impossible, otherwise, to be a good priest. Now, you must examine yourself upon these two points. As to the Bar; if you follow that profession, I require your most sacred promise that you will never assert a fact which you do not believe to be true, nor defend a cause which you do not believe to be just. As to the other path, into which M. de Voltaire invites you to enter, it appears to me a wise precaution to secure a situation at Paris, where you may have leisure to acquire information and improve your talents; for, do not deceive yourself, what you have done hitherto is very little. If M. de Voltaire can procure for you this honourable, free and secure situation, go, my son, enter the lists of fame and fortune. I willingly consent; but never forget that virtue is the most suitable and honourable companion of genius." Thus spoke this wonderful woman, who had received no other education but that of a convent at Bort.

Her medical attendant thought it his duty to warn me that my presence was hurtful to her. "Her illness," said he, "arises from the blood being too much inflamed; my great object is to cool it, while you, however unwillingly, cannot avoid increasing its agitation. Every evening, therefore, I find her pulse quicker and higher. Sir, if you wish her health to be restored, you must go away. But take particular care that she be not too much affected by your parting." I bade her this cruel farewell, and my mother then showed a courage superior to mine, for she no longer had any hope, while there was still a shadow of it in my mind. The moment I spoke of the necessity of returning to my pupils, she said: "Yes, my son, you must go. We have met and opened our hearts to each other; we have now only to take a tender farewell, for I need not exhort you—" She stopped and her eyes filled with tears. "I am thinking," said she, "of the worthy mother whom I have lost, and who was so fond of you. She died like a saint. How happy would she have been to see you once again! But I must endeavour to die in the same pious frame of mind. We shall meet again in the presence of God." Then, changing the subject, she spoke of Voltaire. I had sent her the handsome present he made me of a corrected copy of his works. She had read them over and still continued to read them. "If you see him," said she, "thank him for the agreeable moments he has made your mother spend. Tell him that she could repeat by heart the second act of 'Zara'; that she bedewed 'Merope' with her tears; and that these beautiful lines of the 'Henriade,' upon Hope, were continually present to her memory and her heart:

'Mais aux mortels cheris à qui le ciel l'envoie,
Elle n'inspire point une infidele joie;
Elle apporte de Dieu la promesse et l'appui,
Elle est inebranlable et pure comme lui.'"[1]

My very soul was rent by hearing her thus talk of herself—as of one who would soon be no more. But, as I had been exhorted to shun carefully whatever could affect her too much, I took no notice of this foreboding. Next day, hiding from each other the grief of separation, we took leave as calmly as Nature would allow.

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[1] "But those favoured mortals to whom heaven sends her, are inspired by her with no treacherous joy. She brings from heaven assurance and support; she is, like heaven itself, pure and unalterable."

As soon as I left her I sank into the deepest dejection, and all the reflections which arose during my journey were of the same overwhelming nature. "Soon, then," said I, "I shall no longer have my mother, the adored mother, who, since my birth, has breathed only for me; whose displeasure I dreaded like that of God; nay, if I may dare to say it, more than that of God himself; for I thought of her much oftener; and when I had any temptation to overcome, it was my mother always whose presence restrained me. What would she say, if she knew my thoughts? what shame, what grief would she feel?" With these reflections, I opposed my irregular inclination, and then Reason resumed her empire, seconded as she was by Nature, who reigned supreme over my heart. To those who, like me, have experienced this tender filial affection, I need not describe my sadness and dejection. Yet I still had a ray of hope, which, though faint, was too dear to me not to be cherished till the last moment.

I went then to complete my studies; and, having entered into the school of canon law, so as to leave myself the option of both professions, my final determination would probably have been for the Bar. But, about the end of the year, a short note from Voltaire determined me to set out for Paris. "Come," said he; "there is no fear for you. I have spoken to M. Orri, who undertakes to provide for you. (Signed) VOLTAIRE." Who might this M. Orri be? I knew not, but went to ask my good friends at Toulouse, and showed them my note. "M. Orri!" exclaimed they; "mercy on us! he is comptroller-general of finance. Ah! my dear fellow, your fortune is made; you will be a farmer-general. Remember us in your glory. When the minister has once undertaken to patronize you, you will easily gain his esteem, his confidence, and his friendship. Dear

Marmontel, now that you are at the fountain of Court favour, do turn a few rivulets our way. Our ambition would be satisfied with a little streamlet from Pactolus." One of them would have chosen to be receiver-general, another was satisfied with a more private appointment, such as might yield him two or three thousand crowns a year; all this was in my power.

I forgot to mention that I and some of my friends had formed ourselves into a literary society, meant as a rival to the Academy of Floral Games, and which had already acquired some celebrity under the name of "The Little Academy." Its members vied with each other in raising my hopes. I was most eager to set out; but, as my future opulence did not supersede the necessity of present economy, I was looking about for the cheapest mode of travelling, when M. de Puget, a president of the Parliament, asked me to call upon him; and proposed, in an obliging manner, that his son and I should go to to Paris in a *litière* at our common expense. I answered that, though the *litière* appeared to me a slow and tiresome mode of travelling, yet the advantage of being in good company would make up for that disadvantage, but that, as to the expense of the journey, my account was fixed. By the courier it would cost me just forty crowns,[1] and I was determined not to exceed that sum. The president in vain attempted to extract something more from me; and, as he must otherwise have paid the whole *litière*, my little contribution was a clear gain to him.

I left my brother at Toulouse; and my place in the College of St. Catharine would have been fully secured to him, if he had been in the philosophical class. But there was no admission to it till after five years' attendance, so that there was a necessity, for the present, of relinquishing this advantage; and I settled my brother in the Irish seminary. I advanced a year of his board, and, at parting, left him all that remained of my money, so that I set out from Toulouse with just a crown in my pocket. But a new supply awaited me at Montauban.

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[1] Five pounds.

Montauban, as well as Toulouse, had a literary academy, which gave an annual prize. This prize I had gained, but had not yet received it. It was a silver lyre, worth about twelve guineas. On my arrival, I went to receive this lyre, which I immediately sold. From this sum, after advancing to the muleteer the expenses of my journey, and giving a good entertainment to my friends, a crowd of whom had followed me as far as Montauban, I had still above fifty crowns remaining. It was more than enough for a man for whom Fortune awaited at Paris. Never did anyone, with such expectations, travel so slowly to meet her. Yet this journey was not so tiresome as I expected. I was always fortunate in my muleteers. Our present one gave excellent entertainment; nor did I ever eat better partridges, turkeys and truffles. I was ashamed to live so well for forty crowns, and resolved to make a present to this honest fellow as soon as my situation should admit of my indulging a liberal disposition.

My travelling companion, indeed, paid better, and accordingly he wished to take advantage of that circumstance; but this he found me not at all disposed to admit of. The first day I let him take the seat behind, and, though sick with the jolting of the carriage, and the being driven backward, I quietly suffered these inconveniences. I did not even express how tired I was of hearing this silliest of spoiled children tell long stories of his noble descent, his large fortune, and the high office of president with which his father was invested. I let him boast of the beauty of his large blue eyes, and his charming figure, which, he said, with great simplicity, had made all the women in love with him; he told me how they ogled and caressed him, and kissed his fine eyes. I listened patiently, only saying to myself: "What a ridiculous thing is vanity."

Next day I saw him enter the carriage first, and take the seat behind. "All in good time, my lord marquis," said I; "the front if you please." He answered that he was in his own place; and that his father had understood he was to have the place behind. I answered that if his father had tacitly understood so in making his bargain, I, in making mine, had understood quite otherwise; that, had he proposed it, I would not have cooped myself up like a fool in this jolting box, while on horseback I might, at the same price, have enjoyed the open air and a view of the country; that I had been fool enough already, in spending my forty crowns to so little purpose; nor would I increase my folly by giving him always the good seat. He still attempted to keep it; but, though he was as tall as myself, I begged him not to oblige me to drag him out by force. He understood this argument, and took the other seat, but was in a very bad humour the whole forenoon. However, he was satisfied with depriving me of his conversation; but at dinner his sense of superiority again began to show itself. A partridge was brought to table. He prided himself upon carving well:

"Quo gestu lepores, et quo gallina secetur."

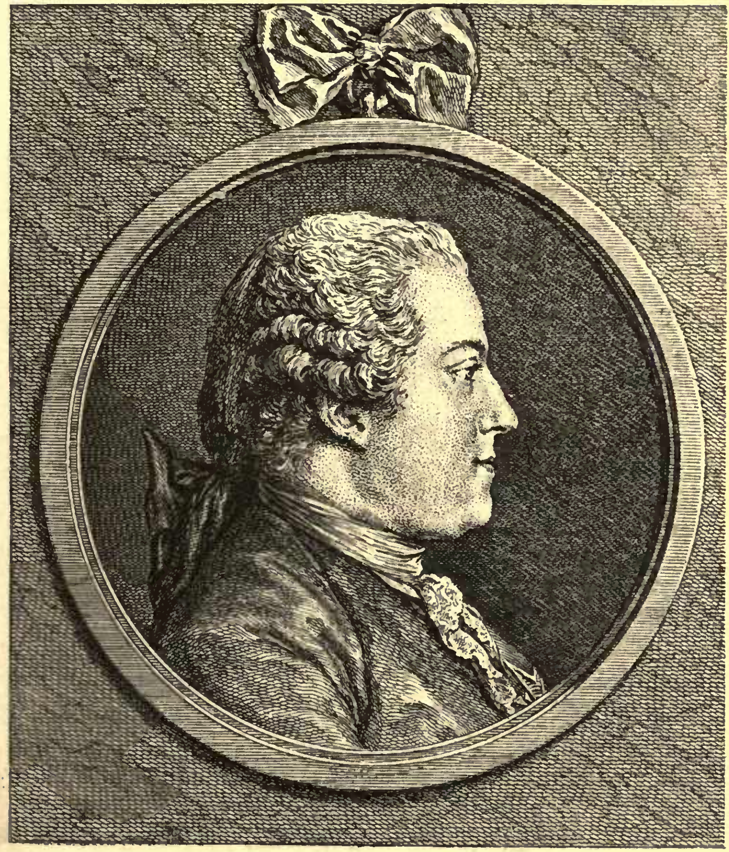
This, indeed, was an art which he had been carefully taught. He took the bird, therefore, on his plate, cut off very expertly the two legs and the two wings, kept the two wings for himself, and left me the legs and body. "You appear," said, I "to like the wing of a partridge." "Yes," said he, "I do." "Well, so do I;" and then, laughing, and without the least anger, I put things on an equal footing. "You are a bold man," said he, "to take a wing off my plate." "You showed yourself much more so," said I, "when you took two to yourself." His face was red with anger; but he grew moderate, and we dined quietly. The rest of the day he shrunk into a dignified silence; and as at supper we had the wing of a turkey, of which I gave him the best part, there was no dispute.

The next day I said: "Now it is your turn to take the back of the carriage." He took it, saying: "You are very good indeed;" and our ride was likely to be as silent as the evening before, when an accident occurred which gave it animation. The marquis took snuff, and so did I—thanks to a young and handsome girl who had given me this taste. He opened, pouting, his beautiful snuff-box; while I, without any pouting, held out my hand and took a pinch, as if we had been the best friends in the world. He allowed me to take it, and, after thinking a few minutes, said: "Well, I must tell you a story, which happened to M. de Maniban, first president in the Parliament of Toulouse." I saw that he was going to say something impertinent; however, I listened. "M. de Maniban," continued he, "was giving audience, in his closet, to a *quiz*, who was carrying on a law-suit, and came to solicit his interest. The magistrate, as he listened, opened his snuff-box; the *quiz* took a pinch out of it. The first president showed no displeasure; but, ringing for his servants and throwing away the snuff which the *quiz* had touched, he ordered the box to be filled anew." I took no notice of the application of the parable; but, some time after, my coxcomb having produced his box, I took snuff as easily as at first. Seeing him surprised, I said, smiling: "Well, my lord marquis—ring! There is no bell. It is well for you there is not; for, had you rung, the *quiz* would have given you a sound drubbing." You may suppose how much he was stunned by my reply. He seemed disposed to be angry, but I was now in a passion myself. "Keep quiet," said I, "or I will cut off your ears. It appears that I have got a young fool to correct, and, from this moment, I declare that I will not put up with a single impertinence. Consider we are going to a city where the son of a provincial president is nobody; and henceforth begin, if possible, to behave in a polite and modest manner; for self-sufficiency, conceit and foolish pride, will, on your entrance into the world, bring you into much more disagreeable situations." During this speech he covered his eyes with his hands and wept. I took pity upon him, and assumed the tone of a real friend. I expostulated with him upon his ridiculous boasting, his childish vanity, his silly pretentions; and thought I saw his brain gradually relieved of the vapours with which it had been puffed up. "After all," said he, "what would you have me do? This is the style in which I have been educated." Among other marks of kindness, I almost always yielded the seat behind, being more accustomed than he to the inconvenience of being driven backwards. This complaisance thoroughly reconciled us; but, as our conversations were interrupted by long intervals of silence, I had time to translate into verse the poem of "The Rape of the Lock"—an amusement the fruits of which were soon of great advantage to me.

My reveries were also supplied with two copious sources of agreeable illusion. One was the idea of the fortune I was to make, and the hope, if heaven should spare my mother, that she could come and live with me at Paris; the other was the fanciful and magnificent picture which I had drawn of that capital, where even the least splendid parts must, I thought, possess an elegant and noble simplicity. One of these illusions was destroyed on my first entrance into Paris; the other not long after. On my arrival I took up my lodging at the Julian Baths, and went next morning to the levee of Voltaire.

MARMONTEL

ENGRAVED BY G. MERCIER



BOOK III

My young readers on whom Nature has bestowed any genius and love for the arts, must remember the emotion they felt on being introduced to men who had acquired celebrity in the pursuit which formed their own study and delight. To them I need not describe the agitation, the wonder, the kind of religious awe which I experienced on approaching Voltaire.

Expecting that it would fall to my part to speak first, I had turned, in twenty different ways, the words with which I should first address him; but nothing had satisfied me. He relieved me from this embarrassment. As soon as he heard my name, he came, and, holding out his arms, said: "My friend, I am very glad to see you; yet I have bad news to tell you: M. Orri had undertaken to provide for you; he is in disgrace."

It was impossible to fall from a greater height, or in a manner more sudden and unforeseen; yet I was not stunned. Considering the natural weakness of my soul, I have been always astonished at the courage which I have exerted on great occasions. "Well, sir," said I, "I must continue to struggle with adversity; I have long known, and been in the habit of contending with it." "I am glad," said he, "to see you thus confident of your own powers. Yes, my friend, the best and highest resource of a man of letters is in himself, and in his talents. But, till yours afford you subsistence (let me speak frankly as a friend), I must supply your wants. After inviting you here, I must not abandon you. If you want money, this very moment tell me; you must have no other creditor than Voltaire." I thanked him for his kindness, assuring him that for some time I should have no occasion for it, but would not hesitate to apply in case of necessity. "Well," said he, "I depend upon your promise. Meanwhile, tell me in what are you to employ yourself." "Alas! I know not; it is you that must tell me." "The theatre, my friend—the theatre is the noblest of all pursuits! there we arrive, in one day, at glory and fortune. A single successful play is sufficient to procure, for a young man, both wealth and celebrity; and application will render you successful." "I feel no want of ardour," replied I, "but what shall I compose for the theatre?" "A good comedy," said he, in a determined tone. "Ah! sir, how should I draw portraits? I never saw the faces." He smiled at this answer, and said: "Well, write tragedy." I answered that I was somewhat better acquainted with its characters, and that I would try my powers in this kind of composition. Thus passed my first interview with this illustrious man.

On leaving him, I took lodgings with a cook in the Rue des Maçons, near the Sorbonne. My lodging cost me seven shillings and sixpence a month, and for eighteen sous I had a tolerably good dinner, part of which I kept for supper; in short, I lived very well. Yet my six guineas would not have gone very far; but I found an honest bookseller, who agreed to purchase my translation of the "Rape of the Lock," and gave me twelve guineas for it. This sum was in bills, indeed, which were not equal to ready money. However, a Gascon, with whom I had formed an acquaintance at the coffee-house, found out in the street of St. André-des-Arts, a grocer, who agreed to take my bills, provided I purchased goods to that amount. I bought twelve guineas' worth of sugar, and, after having paid the money, I begged him to take back the sugar and sell it for me. I lost little by the transaction, so that the six guineas I brought from Montauban, joined to the twelve pounds that the sugar yielded, would enable me, without borrowing from anyone, to go on till the issuing of the next academic prizes. Lodging and board together would, for eight months, come only to twelve pounds; for other expenses I had about six pounds. It was quite enough, for, by keeping in bed, I should use little wood in winter. In short, I could go on till midsummer without anxiety; and, if I should gain the prize of the French Academy, which was about twenty guineas, it would carry me to the end of the year. This calculation kept up my spirits.

My first employment was the study of the dramatic art. Voltaire furnished me with books. Aristotle's "Art of Poetry," P. Corneille's "Reflections," his "Discourses on the Three Unities," "The Greek Theatre," and "The Modern Tragic Writers," were all eagerly and rapidly perused. I longed to make a trial of my powers; and the first subject which my impatience suggested was "The Revolution of Portugal." The political interest of this subject was too weak for dramatic effect; still weaker was the manner in which I had hastily conceived and handled it. Some scenes which I communicated to an intelligent actor, led him to augur well of me. But the theatre, he said, was the proper place for studying the dramatic art; and he advised me, through the medium of Voltaire, to procure a ticket of free admission to it. "Roselli is in the right," said Voltaire, "the theatre is the school for us all. It must be open to you. I should have thought of it sooner." A ticket of admission to the French Theatre was freely granted me; and, from that time, I never, for a single day, missed taking a lesson there. I cannot express how much this constant study forwarded the progressive enlargement of my ideas, and of any little capacity which I might have received from Nature. I never witnessed the representation of a tragedy without making some reflections upon the resources of the art, and without acquiring some new degree of warmth in style, imagination and feeling.

In order to draw from the fountain of good tragic subjects, I ought to have gone deep into the study of history; and I should have had the courage to do so, but I had not the time. I ran lightly over ancient history; and, being struck with the subject of Dionysius the Tyrant, I never rested till the plan of a drama was conceived, and all the springs of action invented and arranged; but I said nothing to Voltaire, because I wished both to make it entirely my own performance, and to present it to him with all the advantage which the last finish would give to it.

It was at this time that I met, at his house, with the man of all others whom I have loved most—the worthy, the virtuous, the wise Vauvenargue.[1] His person had been cruelly treated by Nature, but his soul was one of her rarest works. I thought I saw in him an infirm and suffering Fénélon. He expressed kindness for me, and I easily obtained permission to visit him. His conversations, could I have collected them, would have made an excellent book. Some traces of them may be seen in the collection which he has left of his thoughts and meditations. But, eloquent and feeling as his writings are, his conversations with us were, I think, still more so. I say, *with us;* for I commonly met, at his house, a man entirely devoted to him, and who, by that very circumstance, soon gained my esteem and confidence. This was Beauvin, the same who afterwards wrote the tragedy of the "Cherusci," a sensible man, and not devoid of taste; but of a very indolent character, and naturally fond of pleasure, though almost as poor as myself.

The perfect agreement of our sentiments with regard to the Marquis de Vauvenargue, formed a kind of sympathy between us. In order to study the taste and disposition of the public, we met, every evening after the play, at the Procope coffee-house—the tribunal of criticism and the school of young poets. There we always talked together; and, on the days when there was no play, we passed our afternoons in solitary walks. Thus we became every day more necessary to each other's enjoyment, and felt greater regret at parting. At last Beauvin said to me: "Why should we part? why not live together? The fruit-dealer with whom I lodge has a room to let; now, by keeping house at our joint expense, we shall live much cheaper." I answered that this arrangement would be extremely agreeable to me, but that just now I could not think of it. He asked the reason, and urged me so strongly that I felt myself under the necessity of explaining it. "The exactness," said I, "with which I have hitherto paid my landlord, must have gained me a degree of credit with him, which I should not find elsewhere, and of which I must immediately avail myself." Beauvin, who was worth twelve guineas, bade me not be uneasy upon that head; that he could advance me what I needed, and that he had a project in view which might enrich us both. I then laid open to him my own hopes and resources. I showed him the piece which I was to offer for the prize of the French Academy; he thought it was so many ingots of gold. I showed him, also, the plan and the first scenes of my tragedy. He answered for its success; it was the mine of Potosi. The Marquis de Vauvenargue lodged at the Hôtel de Tours, Petite rue de Paon; opposite to this hotel was the house of Beauvin's fruit-dealer, where I now took up my lodgings. His plan was, that we two should publish a periodical paper; but this did not prove so good a speculation as he had hoped. We had not enough of venom; so that, as the paper contained neither an unjust and severe criticism upon works of merit, nor bitter satire against good authors, it had little sale. However, by means of this little item, and of the prize of the Academy, which I was fortunate enough to obtain, we reached the autumn—both ruminating, I on tragic poetry, and he on his tender engagements.

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[1] See note (2) at the end.

He was ugly, bandy-legged, and was already even come to a good age, yet he was the favoured lover of a young nymph of Artois, of whom he talked every day with the most tender regret; for he endured the miseries of absence, and I was the echo that answered to his sighs. Though much younger than he, my mind was occupied with other cares. The heaviest of my anxieties was the repugnance which the keeper of the hotel already showed to give us credit. The baker and grocer were still willing to supply us, the one with bread, and the other with cheese, which formed our supper; but dinner was every day like to fail us. I had one hope remaining. Voltaire, who strongly suspected that my pride was greater than my opulence, had proposed that the little poem, crowned by the Academy, should be printed for my benefit; and had insisted on a bookseller reckoning with me, deducting the expense of printing. But the bookseller had either made little of it, or was fonder of his own profit than of mine, for he said he had nothing to give me, as half the edition, at least, remained on his hands. "Well," said Voltaire, "give me what remains; I will find sale for it." He set out for Fontainebleau, where the Court then resided; and the subject proposed by the Academy having been a panegyric on the King, Voltaire undertook to disperse this panegyric, estimating, at his own price, the author's profit. I was counting upon this sale without, however, being too sanguine; but there was no appearance of Voltaire arriving.

At last, our situation became such, that Beauvin said to me, with a sigh: "My friend, our resources are exhausted; we have not enough now to pay the water-carrier." His spirits, I saw, were sunk, but mine were not. "Do the baker and grocer," said I, "refuse us credit." "No," said he, "not yet." "Then all is well," said I, "we may easily do without the water-carrier." "How so?" "How? Why, by just going ourselves to draw water at the fountain." "What! have you courage to do so?" "Doubtless, I have; much courage, indeed, it requires. It is night; and even in daylight where, pray, is the disgrace of a man serving himself?" Then, taking the pitcher, I went proudly and filled it at the neighbouring fountain. Returning with the pitcher in my hand, I met Beauvin coming to me with open arms, in an ecstacy of joy. "See! my friend, it is she herself! She is come! She has left friends, family and all for me! Is not this love?" I turned my eyes in speechless astonishment, and, still holding the pitcher in my hand, I saw a tall, fresh-looking girl, well made and rather pretty. She saluted me without the least embarrassment; but the contrast between this romantic incident and our present situation threw me suddenly into such a violent fit of laughter that they were both stunned. "Madam," said I, "you are welcome; you could not choose your time better, nor arrive more opportunely." And, after the first civilities had passed, I went down to the green-grocer. "Madam," said I, "this is an extraordinary day—a festival. You must, if you please, assist us in doing the honours of the house, and enlarge somewhat the acute angle of cheese which you give us for supper." "But what is this woman doing here?" said she. "Oh! madam, it is a miracle of love, and we must never ask an account of miracles. All that you and I should know on the subject is that this evening we must have a third more of that good cheese, which we will soon pay for, if it be the will of God." "Ay," said she, "if it be the will of God. But, when one has not a penny, it is not just the time to be thinking of love."

Voltaire came from Fontainebleau a few days after, and filled my hat with crown pieces, telling me they had been produced by the sale of my poem. Although the distress in which I was might have excused my accepting his bounty, I yet took the liberty of representing that he had sold this little work too much above its value. But he gave me to understand that those who had paid liberally were persons from whom neither he nor I could, with propriety, refuse anything. Some of Voltaire's enemies thought I should have quarrelled with him on that account. I did no such thing; but, thinking that there would have been more impropriety in refusing than in accepting this money, I set out with it to pay all my debts.

Beauvin had received some assistance from the country; I had none to look for from that quarter, and my finances were likely to be soon at an end. It was, therefore, neither just nor possible, considering his new mode of life, that our expenditure should be any longer common.

In this condition, one of the most cruel I ever experienced, when, watering my pillow every night with tears, I looked back with regret on the plenty and tranquility I had enjoyed at Toulouse, it happened, either through the favourable influence of my star, or the good character that Voltaire gave of me, that a woman, whose memory I revere, asked me to undertake the instruction of her grandson. The recollection of this event must, indeed, be every way dear to my heart. What inestimable pleasures of society and friendship has it diffused over my life! what years of happiness has it made me enjoy!

Her son-in-law, a director of the East India Company, of the name of Gilly, had embarked in a maritime trade, which first enriched and then ruined him. He was left a widower, with a son and daughter, of whom Madame Harenc had agreed to take charge. It is impossible to conceive a more agreeable old woman than Madame Harenc; and she possessed, besides, the greatest good sense, the most uncommon prudence, and most steady virtue. She was ugly, at first sight, to a repulsive degree; but the charms of her mind and character soon shone through this ugliness, and made it be, not forgotten merely, but loved. Madame Harenc had an only son, as ugly and as agreeable as herself. He was M. de Presle, who, I believe, is still alive, and has long been distinguished, by his taste and discernment, among the lovers of the arts. Their society was selected with care, and had an intimate, confidential and peaceful character. It was always serene, and sometimes gay. The feeling, taste and understanding of its members were in perfect unison. It was constantly embellished by a few women, who were tenderly attached to each other. We had the fair Desfourniels, the regularity, delicacy, and inimitable elegance of whose features threw the most able painters into despair; and Nature seemed to have taken pleasure in forming a soul exactly corresponding with so beautiful a form. We had also her sister, Madame de Valdec, the then happy mother of the unfortunate de Lessart, whom we have seen slain at Versailles with the other prisoners from Orleans. We had also the young Desfourniels, since Countess of Chabrillant, who had neither the same beauty nor the same character as her mother; she was even a little satirical, but withal so agreeable that we readily forgave the too eager warmth of some of her sallies. A Mademoiselle Lacome, the intimate friend of Madame Harenc, behaved with a judicious mildness, which agreed well with all these characters. M. de Presle, curious after all literary novelties, formed them into an exquisite collection, of which he gave us the first taste. M. de Lantage, whose castle I inhabit in this valley, and his eldest brother, an intelligent man, passionately fond of Rabelais, introduced among us the best style of the ancient gaiety. Nor, talking of this charming society, must I forget the worthy M. de l'Osiliere, who, next to Vauvenargue, was the truest philosopher I ever knew. The contrast between the depth of his understanding and the unaffected simplicity of his character and manners, brought La Fontaine to our recollection.

Into this family, then, I was introduced, and was soon treated like a son. Conceive my happiness when, besides so many other pleasures, I found my pupil to be a young man of good disposition, perfectly innocent and docile, with a degree of memory and intelligence which made none of my lessons be lost upon him. He died before the age of manhood; and Nature, in him, destroyed one of her fairest works. He was as handsome as Apollo, yet I never could perceive that he had any suspicion of his own beauty. By his side, and without depriving him of any of the time and care due to his studies, I completed my tragedy. This year, also, I gained the prize for poetry; so that I should number it among the happiest of my life, had it not been for the distress into which I was thrown by the death of my mother. The kindness of Madame Harenc afforded me every consolation of which so deep an affliction was susceptible. I left her in consequence of my pupil being recalled by his father, who had destined him for another kind of study. But, ever since that time till the death of this respectable woman, she continued tenderly attached to me, and always treated me as one of her own family.

My tragedy being finished, it was time to submit it to Voltaire's correction; but Voltaire was at Cirey. I saw clearly that my wisest plan was to wait his return to Paris. How much should I have been assisted by the critical examination and advice of such a master! But the more my work would have gained by his criticism, the less it would have been my own.

Perhaps, too, by requiring efforts beyond my strength, he might have discouraged me. Having been led by these reflections to form a different resolution, I went and asked the players to hear my piece read. It was very favourably listened to; the three first acts and the fifth met their full approbation, but they acknowledged that the fourth was too weak. The truth is, I had formed a different plan for the fourth act, but had relinquished it as too bold. I now saw that an excessive prudence had rendered me frigid; and I resumed my boldness. I asked three days to compose another act, which I was to read on the fourth. During the interval, I slept little; but this long watching was fully repaid by the approbation with which my new act was read, and the idea of my powers, which was inspired by so speedy and prosperous a performance. Then began the tribulations I had to undergo in the capacity of an author.

The first arose from the distribution of the characters. When the performers granted me free admission to the theatre, Mademoiselle Gaussin had solicited most actively in my favour. The parts of princesses were regularly assigned to her; she excelled in all tender characters which required only the natural expression of love and grief. She possessed beauty, and that of the most interesting kind; her tones went to the heart; and her look, when in tears, had an inexpressible charm. Her performance, in a character that suited her, was everything that could be wished; so that she had inspired this verse, addressed by Zara to Orosman:

> "L'art n'est pas fait pour toi, tu n'en as pas besoin."[1]

We may thus suppose how much she was beloved by the public, and secure of its favour. But for characters which were to display pride, strength, and tragic emotion, her powers were too feeble; that voluptuous softness which suited so well with tender characters, was directly opposite to the vigour which the part of my heroine demanded. Yet Mademoiselle Gaussin had made no secret of her desire to perform it; she had expressed it to me in a manner the most flattering and seductive, and both times that my performance was read, had affected the most lively interest, both in itself and its author.

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[1] "Art is not made for thee, thou needst it not."

New tragedies were then rare, and still rarer were the parts that were expected to prove successful; but the motive which weighed most strongly with her was the desire of snatching this part from an actress who was daily carrying off some of hers. The jealousy of talent never inspired a fiercer hatred than that of the fair Gaussin for the youthful Clairon. The latter had not the same charming figure; but her voice, her features, her action, and, above all, the energy and pride with which she supported her character, made her admirably fitted for the expression of violent passions and lofty sentiments. Since she had seized on the parts of Camilla, Dido, Ariana, Roxana, Hermione, and Alzira, there had been a necessity for yielding them. Her performance was not subjected to rule, as in the sequel; but it had already all the essence of excellent acting. In a vigorous, lofty and enthusiastic character, such as that of Aretia, there could be no hesitation between her and her rival; and unwilling as I was to offend the one, I at once offered it to the other. Gaussin could not conceal her resentment. She said it was well known by what kind of seduction Clairon had obtained the preference. She was in the wrong; but Clairon, incensed at this accusation, made me follow her into her rival's box, where, without forewarning me of what was to happen, she said: "Well, madam, here he is, brought by myself; and that you may judge if I have seduced him, or even solicited the preference he has given me, I declare to you and to himself, that if I accept his part, it must be from your hands that I receive it." At these words, throwing the manuscript upon the front of the box, she left us together.

I was then just twenty-four, and found myself alone with one of the most beautiful of women. Her trembling hands clasped mine, and her fine eyes were fixed on me with a beseeching look. "What have I done," asked she, with her sweet voice, "to deserve the mortification and distress that you cause me? When M. de Voltaire requested your admission to this theatre, it was I that made the proposal. When you read your performance, no one was more sensible of its beauties than I. I listened attentively to the part of Aretia, and was so deeply affected, that I think it impossible for me not to give a just representation of it. Why then deprive me of it? It belongs to me, if by no other right, at least by that of seniority. You do me injustice when you give it to another, and I doubt very much if it be your own interest. Trust me, it is not a laboured and noisy declamation that suits this character. Think well before you decide. Anxious as I am for my own success, I am not less so for yours, to which it will give me the greatest pleasure to contribute."

I had now certainly a most painful effort to make. My eyes, my ears, my heart were exposed defenceless to the sweetest of all enchantments. Charmed in every sense, moved to the very soul, I was on the point of yielding, and of falling on my knees before her who seemed so well disposed to receive me. But the fate of my work was at stake, of my only hope, the dependence, too, of my poor children; and the alternative of complete success or failure was so fully present to my mind, that this interest prevailed over all the emotions with which I was agitated.

"Mademoiselle," replied I, "had I been so happy as to form a character like that of Andromache, of

Iphigenia, of Zara, and of Ines, I should throw myself at your feet and entreat you to embellish it still more. No one is more sensible than I of the charm with which you express an affecting grief, a timid or tender love. But, unhappily, the action of my piece is not susceptible of such a character; and though the powers which mine requires be less rare, less precious, than those beautiful talents with which you are endowed, still you must own they are quite different. One day I may be able to avail myself of your sweet accents, your enchanting looks, your eloquent tears, and your divine beauty, in a character worthy of you. Resign the dangers of my first appearance to her who is willing to brave them. You may at once retain the honour of having yielded me this character, and avoid sharing with me the dangers which attend its performance." "It is enough," said she, with stifled resentment. "You will have it so; I yield." Then, taking up the manuscript, she left the box, and finding Clairon in the green-room, said, with an ironical look: "I restore you, without regret, the character from which you expect such success and glory. I agree in thinking that it suits you better than myself." Mademoiselle Clairon, with a modest pride, took it, while I silently cast down my eyes till this scene was over. But in the evening, when my actress and I supped by ourselves, I breathed at liberty from the restraint she had laid upon me. She was not a little gratified by the constancy with which I had stood this trial, and it laid the foundation of that lasting friendship which has continued through the rest of our lives.

This was not the only character which gave me uneasiness. Grandval, whom I intended to perform Dionysius the Elder, refused to appear in any other character than Dionysius the Younger. I was obliged to give the first to an actor called Ribou, who was younger than Grandval. Ribou was handsome and well made, and his manner was not deficient in dignity; but he was so totally devoid of intelligence that there was a necessity for explaining his part to him in common language, and teaching him word for word as if he had been a child. However, by dint of hard labour, I brought him to a capacity of acting it tolerably, and when the dress was a little disguised, his youth was no longer found to injure the theatrical illusion.

The time of rehearsal came. Then it was that the connoisseurs began to pass sentence. They fixed particularly upon the fourth act, which, as I said before, had appeared too bold even to myself. The critical moment was that in which Dionysius the Younger, with the view of disarming the movers of sedition, kept his mistress as a hostage in his father's palace. Mademoiselle Clairon heard people saying that the piece would split upon this rock, and would go no farther. She proposed to assemble at her house a few persons of taste, whom she was accustomed to consult, to read the play without giving any notice of the passage we were afraid of, and see what they would think. I agreed, and the council was assembled, consisting of the following persons:

First, we had d'Argental, the vile parasite of Voltaire, and an enemy to all talents which threatened to meet with success. Next, Chauvelin, the public accuser of the Jesuits, who, by acting this odious part, acquired some degree of celebrity. It was said of him:

> "Quelle est cet grotesque ebauche?
> Est-ce un homme? Est-ce un sapajou?
> Cela parle, &c."[1]

We had also the Count de Praslin, who, like d'Argental, was nobody, except in the green-room, till his cousin thought proper to invest this useless being with diplomatic and ministerial honours. Lastly, we had the vile Marquis of Thibouville, noted, even among the infamous, for the impudence with which he practised the most loathsome vices, and the excess to which he carried a luxury as disgusting as it was vain and effeminate. The only merit possessed by this man, loaded with every kind of infamy, was that of repeating verses with a broken and enervated voice, and an affected softness, which suited his character.

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[1] "What odd half-formed creature is this? Is it a man? Is it a marmoset? It speaks."

How came such persons to possess credit and authority at the theatre? It was by paying court to Voltaire, who did not feel sufficient contempt for the homage of unworthy flatterers, and by persuading the young Duke d'Aumont that he could not manage the French Theatre better than by following the advice of Voltaire's friends. Our young actress had been dazzled by the air of judgment and consequence assumed by these gentlemen; her respect for their understanding astonished me. I read my work, to which they listened in the most solemn silence; and Mademoiselle Clairon, having then assured them that I was very ready to take advice, begged them freely to give me theirs. D'Argental was asked to speak first. Everyone knows how he gave an opinion; broken words, with intervals of mysterious silence, vague, obscure and indeterminate expressions, were all I could extract from him; till at last, gaping like a fish, he declared that we must see how it would take. After him, M. de Praslin said that really this play contained many things worthy of reflection, and, in an important tone, advised me to think of it. The Abbé Chauvelin, shaking his small legs from the top of his arm-chair, assured us that it was a great mistake to suppose a tragedy so easy a thing; design, plot, characters, language, all together, it was no child's play. For his part, he did not wish to pass too severe a sentence, yet he could not help recognising this as the work of a young man; as to other particulars, he referred to the opinion of M. d'Argental. Thibouville spoke in his turn, stroking his chin with his hand to show the beauty of his ring. He might, he believed, understand tragic poetry a little; he had repeated and composed so much, that he should be qualified to judge. Yet how could he enter into particulars after hearing it just once. All he could do was to refer me to the standards of dramatic excellence. This expression would sufficiently show what he meant. By reading Racine and Voltaire, I might easily see the style in which they had written.

Having listened with the greatest attention, without hearing anything clear or specific upon the merits of my work, it struck me that, from an apprehension of giving pain, they might, when speaking before me, have assumed this unmeaning language. "I leave you with these gentlemen," whispered I to Clairon; "they will explain themselves more fully in my absence." When we met in the evening: "Well," inquired I, "have they talked of me more clearly when absent than present?" "Indeed," said she, laughing, "they have talked quite at their ease." "But what did they say?" "They said this play might possibly succeed; but possibly, also, it might not. And all things considered, one will be answerable for nothing; and another thinks nothing can be depended upon." "But did they make no particular remark—on the subject, for instance?" "The subject; ay, that is the critical point. Yet how can they judge? The public is so changeable." "Well, what do they think of the story?" "Why, as to the story, Praslin does not know what to say, nor d'Argental what to think. The other two are of opinion that it must be judged of at the theatre." "Did they say nothing of the characters?" "They said mine would be fine enough if——; that of Dionysius would be well enough, but——" "If! but! Well, what followed?" "They looked in each other's faces and said no more." "But what do they think of the fourth act?" "Ah! as to the fourth act, its lot is freed; it will either fail or be exalted to the skies." "Come," replied I, briskly, "I welcome the omen; it is in your power, madam, to turn the prophecy in my favour." "How so?" "In this way. At the moment when young Dionysius opposes your deliverance, should the audience appear to think this effort of virtue too much, wait not till a murmur break out, but hasten to reply with these lines:—

'Va ne crains rien,'" &c.[1]

The actress understood me, and, as will soon appear, she went beyond my hope.

During the rehearsals of my play, I met with an adventure, which, though formerly related to my children, must now be repeated. It was more than two years since I had left Toulouse, when I had paid only one year of my brother's board at the Irish seminary. A whole year was now due, and, by great economy, I had laid by a hundred crowns to pay it. But the difficulty was to transmit this sum safely, and without expense, to the place of its destination. Boubée, an advocate from Toulouse, and member of the Academy of Floral Games, was then at Paris. I called upon him, and found him in company with a man decorated with a red ribbon, whom I did not know. I asked him if he knew of any safe method of transmitting my money. He said he knew of none. "Goodness!" exclaimed the man with the ribbon, whom I took for a soldier, but who was only a knight of the Order of Christ, "is it not M. Marmontel whom I am fortunate enough to meet? He does not recognise his Toulouse friends." I acknowledged, with confusion, that I did not know to whom I had the honour of speaking. "To Chevalier d'Ambelot," said he, "who used to applaud you so heartily when you gained prizes. Well, though you be so ungrateful, I will do you this little service, and will forward your twelve guineas to the Irish seminary. Give me your address. To-morrow morning you shall receive a bill for this amount, payable at sight; and when the superior informs you that the money is paid, you can send it me at your leisure." Nothing could be more obliging, and I heartily thanked the chevalier for his readiness in doing me this good office.

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[1] See note (3) at the end of the volume.

Talking of Toulouse, the conversation took a gay turn, and I began to hold forth on the amusing originality of character which appeared in that country. "I am sorry," said Boubée, "that you, who used to frequent our Bar, were not present when I pleaded the cause of the painter of the town-house. You know Cammas, that ugly, stupid fellow, who every year daubs an effigy of the new provost. A woman in the neighbourhood accused him of having seduced her. She was with child; she demanded either marriage or high damages for the loss of her innocence, which she had set up for sale since the age of fifteen. The poor devil was in despair, and came to tell me of his disgrace. He swore that she herself had seduced him; he was even for explaining to his judges the manner in which she had done it, and offered to draw a picture of the transaction, and hold it up to the audience. 'Hold your peace,' said I; 'it ill becomes you, indeed, with that great snout of yours, to set yourself up as a poor seduced young man. I will plead your cause, and get you out of the scrape, if you will promise, while the cause is pleading, to keep quiet by my side, and, whatever I say, never to utter a word. Do you understand? Otherwise you will be cast.' He promised to do whatever I wished. Well, the day being arrived, and the cause having come on, my adversary began a long harangue upon the modesty, the weakness and the frailty of the fair sex, and upon the artful snares that were laid for them. Upon its coming to my turn, I began thus: 'The person,' said I, 'for whom I plead is ugly, he is a beggar, he is a fool. (He began to murmur, but I imposed silence.) As to his ugliness, gentlemen, look at him; as to his beggary, he is a painter, and, what is worse, the city painter; as to his folly, let the Court just take the trouble of asking him a question. These three great truths being once established, I reason thus: A girl can be seduced only by money, by understanding, or by appearance. Now, my client cannot have seduced this girl by money, since he is a beggar; nor by understanding, since he is a fool; nor by appearance, since he is ugly, and the ugliest of all men; whence I infer that he is falsely accused.' My conclusions were admitted, and a unanimous verdict was given in my favour."

I assured Boubée that I would not forget a word of this curious pleading; and, on taking leave, thanked anew the Chevalier d'Ambelot for the service he was to do me. Next day, a tall servant in livery, whose hat was bordered with broad Spanish point-lace, brought me the bill, which I immediately sent off.

Three days after, as I was walking, in the morning, through the street of the Comédie Française, a Languedocian, of the name of Favier, a man very well known afterwards, called upon me from the window of the second story. He invited me to come up to his room, which I did, and found a table covered with oysters, and five or six Gascons seated round it. "My friend," said he, "a slight accident obliges me to keep to my room, and these gentlemen are so good as to bear me company. We are just breakfasting; will you sit down with us?" The slight accident was no other than a warrant to arrest his person. Favier was drowned in debt; but as he still retained credit with his wine-merchant, baker, and oyster-woman, he gave us oysters and champagne, as plentifully and as gaily as if he had been swimming in wealth. This man was as careless as a savage, and his morals were dissolute to the last degree; yet he was agreeable, full of understanding and knowledge, spoke well and fluently, and understood business so well that, had he possessed more activity, and more respect for himself, he might have been qualified to fill the greatest employments. I associated little with him; yet I liked his frankness, gaiety and natural eloquence; nay, to confess the truth, I found a dangerous attraction in his taste for pleasure, which resembled that of Horace.

The knight of the red ribbon, d'Ambelot, was of this party. I repeated my thanks for his bill. "You are in jest," said he; "can a slighter service be exchanged between townsmen? for, whatever you may say, I must always reckon you a Toulousan." On my rising to go away, he said: "I am going also, and my carriage is below. Where do you wish to be set down?" I at first declined his offer; but he made a point of my stepping in. "Only allow me," said he, "to look in at the door of one of my friends in the Rue de Colombier. I have just two words to say, and shall be back instantly. Well," continued the scoundrel, "you have seen honest Favier; he is the most spirited, generous fellow in the world, but he has no kind of order or management. After spending a large fortune, he is now undone; yet he continues to spend as lavishly as ever. He is now in distress, which, if possible, I must relieve; for it is our duty to assist a friend in distress."

As soon as we arrived at the hotel, he alighted from his carriage, and came back murmuring to himself in very bad humour. I asked him the cause of his irritation. "My friend," said he, "you are young, and new to the world; take care whom you trust; there are few, indeed, who can be safely relied on. This man, for instance, to whom I would have trusted my whole fortune, this Marquis of Montgaillard——" "I know him. What has he done to make you angry?" "Yesterday evening—but I tell you this under seal of secrecy; repeat it to no one; I would not wish to ruin him—

yesterday evening, in a house where the company were playing, he was mad enough to join them. As I never play, I attempted to dissuade him; but in vain. He punted, and lost; he doubled, redoubled the stakes, and lost the whole of his money. He came and besought me to lend him all I had about me. I had just twelve louis, which I had promised to give honest Favier this morning, for the payment of an urgent debt. I explained to Montgaillard how much I needed them, without telling him for what purpose, and he gave me his word of honour to return them this morning. I gave him the money; he staked, and lost. And, now that I come, expecting to receive it, my man has either gone out or concealed himself, and poor Favier, who is waiting for me, must suppose that I have broken my promise, a thing which I never did to any man in my life. Have I not reason to be angry? You, sir, who understand so well what handsome conduct is, say, have I not?" "Chevalier," said I, "it is now three days since your bill went off; it is therefore due, and I will pay it immediately." "No," said he, "no; I will rather borrow." "That," said I, "is what I will on no account admit of. This money would be lying useless in my hands, and since you need it, it is yours. You must, indeed, allow me to pay it without delay." He made the most handsome resistance; but I pressed him so obstinately, that he was obliged to yield, and to accept my hundred crowns.

Some days after, a letter from the superior of the seminary struck me like a thunderbolt. In this, he reproached me for having trifled with him so far as to send him a piece of useless paper instead of a bill. "The man," said he, "on whom your adventurer has impudently drawn a bill owes him nothing. I, therefore, return it protested." Only conceive my fury. The swindling me out of my poor hundred crowns was a great enough crime; but this was nothing compared with the horrible treachery of making me be suspected, if not of dishonesty, at least of unbecoming levity. "Heavens!" cried I, "how will my brother be now treated?" Frantic with grief and rage, I put on my sword—for, on devoting myself to the theatre, I had changed my profession—and ran to d'Ambelot's. I asked for him. "Ah! the wretch," answered the porter, "he is at Fort l'Evesque. He has cheated us all out of the little money we had." I did not pursue him into his prison, but learned, shortly after, without much affliction, that he died there.

I immediately went and communicated to Madame Harenc my distress at this unlucky adventure. "It is certainly," said she, "a most sacrilegious theft. But will you sup with me?" "Yes, madam." "Then I leave you, just for an instant." And, accordingly, she returned some moments after. "I am thinking," said she, "of your poor brother, who is suffering, perhaps, under the ill-humour of this Irish priest. A new bill, my friend, must be sent him to-morrow." "Yes, madam, such is my intention, if you can only point out a proper banker." "You shall have one. Now, let us talk of your rehearsals. Are you satisfied with the way in which they go on?" I told her my uneasiness about the obscure oracles which had been delivered at Mademoiselle Clairon's. She laughed heartily. "Do you know," said she, "what will be the consequence? Whether your piece succeeds or fails, they will equally have foretold it. But, remember, in either case, that you sup with me on that day, along with our common friends; for we intend either to rejoice or to grieve along with you."

While she was talking to me in this friendly manner, her man of business came in and spoke a few words. When he went out: "Here," said she, "is a bill, which will not be rejected like that of the chevalier." But when I proposed to give her the money, "*Dionysius*," said she, "*Dionysius* is my debtor; he will pay well."

My only anxiety, and a sufficiently heavy one, was now about the fate of my tragedy, an event of such importance to me, that I hope to be forgiven for the moments of weakness which I am going to acknowledge.

At that time, the author of a new piece had a little grated box, in the third circle, over the stage, for himself and his friends. Here I might truly be said to sit upon thorns. I went half-an-hour before the curtain rose, and, till that time, retained some degree of firmness amid all my agitation. But, when my ear was struck with the sound of the curtain rising, the blood froze in my veins. In vain were scent-bottles held to me; nothing had any effect, till I heard the noise of applause at the end of the first scene. From that time things went on always better and better till the passage in the fourth act, about which such threatening predictions had been made; but, as this moment drew near, I was seized with so violent a tremor, that, without exaggeration, the teeth chattered in my mouth. If an extreme agitation of the soul and senses were mortal, I should have died; when the sublime Clairon, seizing, as it were, by violence, the mind of the spectators, pronounced these lines:

"Va ne crains rien," &c.

And the theatre echoed with redoubled applause. Never did man pass from deeper apprehension into a more sudden and heart-felt joy. So strongly was my soul agitated by this last feeling during the rest of the performance, that I breathed only in sobs.

At last it concluded, and then I heard from the pit the sound of applause and acclamation loudly calling upon me to appear. I had now to go down and appear on the stage, but I had not strength to drag myself; my knees bent, and it was necessary to support me.

Merope had been the first play in which the author was called for, and *Dionysius* was the second. A thing which has since become so common as to be no way flattering, was then an honourable distinction, and it was granted me at the three first representations. But this kind of intoxication arose from circumstances, which, in the public eye, greatly enhanced the merit of my work. Crebillon was already old; Voltaire was becoming so; no young man had hitherto appeared to fill their place. I fell, as it were, from the clouds. This first production of a young provincial, of a Limosin, only twenty-four, seemed to give a wonderful promise. And, when pleasures are in question, the public, as is well known, are prone to indulge extravagant hopes. But woe to him who deceives them! Reflection soon convinced me of this truth; nor were the critics tardy in giving me the information. Yet I enjoyed some days of pure and tranquil happiness, particularly at the supper with Madame Harenc, to whose house M. de Presle conducted me after the play. His worthy mother was waiting for us; she took me in her arms, and, as soon as she heard of my success, bedewed me with tears. So tender a reception awakened the recollection of my mother, and a stream of bitterness then mingled with my joy. "Ah! madam," said I, melting into tears, "why have I no longer that affectionate mother whose memory you recall? She would embrace me thus, and would be so happy!" When our friends came, they thought only of congratulating me. "Come," said Madame Harenc, "come and comfort this poor boy. He is weeping for his mother, who would, he says, at this moment, have enjoyed so much pleasure."

This melancholy reflection was only for a moment, and the friendship they expressed soon took entire possession of my soul. Ah! if the unfortunate are relieved by communicating their sorrows, the fortunate, too, experience a lively and delicious pleasure in meeting with hearts which partake their happiness. I have always found it easier to retire into myself in grief than in joy. Whenever my soul is sad, it seeks to be alone; but I have need of friends to be happy along with me.

As soon as the fate of my play was decided, I informed Voltaire of my success, and asked permission to dedicate it to him. You may see, in the collection of his letters, the satisfaction with which he heard of my good fortune, and the kindness with which he received my homage.

The same year that I had the misfortune of losing my mother, Vauvenargue also died. I needed consolation for my sorrows, and found it agreeable to pour them out in my poem to Voltaire. This poem was the most rapidly composed of any of my works; verse came spontaneously; the whole was finished in an evening, and has not been altered since.

Voltaire's prophecy was fulfilled. In a day, in a moment almost, I became rich and celebrated. Of my riches I made a proper use, but it was otherwise with my celebrity. It became the cause of my dissipation and the source of my errors. My life had hitherto been obscure and retired. I lodged in the Rue des Mathurins with two serious students, Lavirotte and the Abbé de Prades, who were employed in translating, one the theology of Huet, and the other, the natural philosophy of Maclaurin, the disciple of Newton. We had also staying with us two Gascon abbés, agreeable idlers, and inexhaustible in their gaiety. While we were busied in our studies, they ran over the town, and, on their return in the evening, diverted us with the news they had collected or with stories of their own invention. The houses which I commonly visited were those of Madame Harenc and her friend, Madame Desfourniels, where I was always welcome; that of Voltaire, where I enjoyed with delight the conversation of my illustrious master and of Mademoiselle Denis, his niece, for that lady was agreeable with all her ugliness, and her easy and unaffected character had imbibed a tincture of that of her uncle. She had much of his taste, his gaiety, his exquisite politeness; so that her society was liked and courted. All these connections tended to inspire me with courage and emulation, and to infuse into my compositions more warmth and animation.

How instructive, in particular, did I find it to have a daily opportunity of listening to the social intercourse of the two most enlightened men of their age. Nothing can be conceived more rich and copious than the conversations of Voltaire and Vauvenargue. Voltaire's consisted of an inexhaustible flow of interesting facts and sallies of fancy; while Vauvenargue displayed an eloquence full of grace, gentleness and wisdom. Never were discussions conducted with such intelligence, mildness and candour; but what charmed me more was, on one side, the respect Vauvenargue showed for Voltaire's genius, and, on the other, the tender veneration of Voltaire for the virtue of Vauvenargue. Neither flattered each other with vain adulation or weak compliance, but honourably distinguished themselves by a freedom of thought, which never interrupted the harmonious union of their sentiments. But, at the time I am speaking of, one of these illustrious friends was no more, and the other was absent, so that I was left too much to myself.

After the success of *Dionysius*, a society, seducing, frivolous and full of curiosity, laid hold upon me and dragged me into the vortex of Paris. It became a kind of fashion for everyone to show at his house the author of the new play. I was flattered by this attention, and had not fortitude to decline it. Being every day invited to dinner or supper at houses where the landlord and his guests were equally strangers to me, I was carried along, as it were, from one society into another, often without knowing whence I came, or whither I was going, and was so fatigued by the perpetual change of objects that, even during my leisure moments, I could no longer apply myself to anything. Yet, I must own that I took pleasure in this variety of changing scenes; and even my friends, while they recommended propriety and moderation, thought I should yield to the sort of desire that people had of seeing me. "By conducting yourself properly," said they, "you will gain, if not friendship, at least good wishes and personal esteem. It is useful for you to observe the manners of the world, and this you can never do well without a near view of it. You are fortunate, therefore, in being so early and so favourably introduced into company."

My friends were certainly in the right, if I had been wise enough to make a moderate use of this advantage. But a too easy temper was my fault from youth, and, when opportunity threw out the allurement of pleasure, I never could resist it.

During this period of thoughtless dissipation, I was one day visited by Monet, afterwards director of the Opèra-Comique, with whom, at that time, I was not acquainted. "Sir," said he, "I have a message to you, which, I believe, will not be disagreeable. Did you ever hear of Mademoiselle Navarre?" I answered that the name was new to me. "She is," continued Monet, "the wonder of our age for wit and beauty. She has just come from Brussels, where she was the ornament and delight of Marshal Saxe's court. Having seen *Dionysius the Tyrant*, she is eagerly desirous of knowing the author, and bade me invite you to dine with her to-day." I readily engaged myself.

Never was I more dazzled than by the first sight of this girl, for her appearance was still more brilliant than beautiful. She was in a Polish dress of the gayest appearance, and two long ringlets floated on her shoulders; jonquil flowers, entwined with her hair, wonderfully heightened the brilliancy of her fine complexion and the fire of the two sparkling eyes with which it was animated. The reception she gave me redoubled the danger of viewing so many charms, and her conversation soon confirmed all I had heard of her wit. Ah! my children, could I have foreseen all the troubles that this day would cause me, with what terror would I have saved myself from the danger into which I was running! This is no fable; it is by the example of your father that you must learn to dread the most seductive of all passions.

Among the guests which the enchantress had this day collected, I found some well-informed and agreeable persons. At dinner there was a great deal of gaiety and gallantry, but without any impropriety. Mademoiselle Navarre could hold with a light hand the reins of colloquial freedom. She was skilful also in dividing her attentions; and, till towards the end of the dinner, distributed them so well that no one had cause to complain. But, by degrees, she behaved to me in a manner so very particular, and, when we went to walk in the garden, showed so clearly her desire to be left alone with me, that the company, one after another, silently glided away. As they were filing off, her dancing-master came in, and I saw her take a lesson. The dance in which she exhibited was then known under the name of the *Aimable Vainqueur.*[1] In it she displayed all the graces of an elegant form, while her motions and attitudes were expressive, sometimes of dignity, sometimes of voluptuous softness. The lesson continued little more than a quarter of an hour, and Lany was dismissed. Mademoiselle Navarre, then humming the tune to which she had danced, asked if I knew the words. I knew them; they began thus:

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[1] Amiable Conqueror.

"Aimable vainqueur,
Fier tyran d'un cœur;
Amour, dont l'empire
Et le martyre
Sont pleins de douceurs," &c.[1]

"But," said I, "if I did not know these words, I would invent them; so much is the present moment fitted to inspire them." A conversation, begun in this manner, was not likely to end very soon. We passed the evening together, and, during a short interval of tranquility, she asked me about the new work in which I was employed. I explained to her the subject and plan, but complained of the involuntary dissipation into which I was forced. "Well," said she, "would you wish to compose quietly, comfortably, and without interruption, come and spend some months at the village of Avenay, in Champagne, where my father has a small house and some vineyards. He has the management of a mercantile house at Brussels, and cannot leave that city. I have come, therefore, to attend to his rural affairs. To-morrow I set out for Avenay, and shall be alone there till after the vintage. As soon as I have everything prepared for your reception, come and live with me there. It will go hard if I and excellent champagne do not inspire you with good poetry." What prudence, what virtue, what human strength could have withstood the charm of such an invitation? I promised to set out at the first signal she gave me. She required the most solemn promise that I would not entrust our secret to anyone, having, as she said, the strongest reasons for concealing our acquaintance.

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[1] "Amiable conqueror, proud tyrant of the heart; Love, whose slavery and whose sufferings are full of sweetness."

Between her departure for Avenay, and mine, two months elapsed; and though the interval was filled up by a very constant and animated correspondence, even this could not save me from the weariness of absence. Her letters, inspired by a lively and brilliant imagination, while they buoyed up mine with the sweetest illusions, produced only a more ardent desire of meeting with her, who, even in absence, could raise me to these transports. I employed this period in disengaging myself from most of my intimate connections. I told some that my new employment required solitude, while, with others, I expressed an intention of visiting my native place. Without entering into any explanation with Madame Harenc, nor with Mademoiselle Clairon, I contrived to prevent them from feeling any anxiety; but, dreading the curiosity and penetration of Madame Denis, I kept my plan of retirement a profound secret from her. Here I must acknowledge myself to have been in the wrong, for, even before my literary success, she had shown herself my friend, and had neglected nothing which could render her house agreeable to me. My friends were kindly received, and became her own; my old friend, the Abbé Raynal, must remember, as well as myself, the agreeable meetings at supper which we had often at her house. His brother, the Abbé Mignot, the worthy Cideville, the two Gascon abbés of the Rue des Mathurins, were all frank and merry; while I, still youthful and gay, might be said on these occasions to be the life of the company. I was merry almost to madness. The lady and her guests were neither much wiser nor graver; and when Voltaire could escape from his Marchioness Du Châtelet and his suppers in high life, he thought himself most happy in coming to take a hearty laugh with us. Alas! why were not my wishes satisfied with this easily-obtained and tranquil happiness? What more was necessary to refresh me after the toil and study of a long day? And what was I going to seek in that dangerous Avenay?

The letter so much desired, so impatiently expected, at length arrived, and fixed the period of my departure. I was then lodging, by myself, in the vicinity of the Louvre. Being freed from anxiety with regard to the expense of my table, I had separated from the companions with whom I formerly kept house, and had in my service only an old woman and a barber, each at five shillings a month. I engaged the latter to find me a courier belonging to the post office, who agreed to carry me, with my little portmanteau, to Rheims. Having found one immediately, I set out. I rode on horseback from Rheims to Avenay; and though Love be said to have wings, truly he had none for me. I was bruised almost to pieces before I arrived.

Here, my children, a veil must be thrown over my lamentable follies. Though I was then very young, and though the time be distant, I do not choose to appear before your eyes in this state of delirium and intoxication. It is proper, however, you should know that the deceitful sweets which I was allowed to taste were mingled with the most odious bitters. The most seducing of women was also the most capricious. Amid the enchantments she held out, her coquetry was continually inventing some new means of exercising dominion over me; her will, to which mine was always obliged to be subservient, was changing every instant. She made, as it were, a kind of game of rendering me alternately the happiest of lovers and the most wretched of slaves. We were alone, but she had the art of disturbing our solitude by raising up unforeseen events. The irritability of her nerves, and the remarkable activity of her animal spirits, occasioned hysterics, which alone were sufficient to torment me. When she was in the most brilliant health and gaiety, her fits began with involuntary bursts of laughter; these were succeeded by a rigidity in all her limbs, by tremor and convulsive motions, that ended in tears. These paroxysms were more grievous to me than to herself; but they rendered her still more dear and interesting; too happy, if caprice had not filled up every lucid interval! Placed alone, as we were, amid the vines of Champagne, how many ways had she of afflicting and tormenting a young man; and to this her talent and inclination alike prompted her. Every day she contrived some new experiment to make upon me. She composed a romance, as it were, in action, and busied herself in bringing on the scenes.

The nuns of the village would not allow her to walk in their garden. She thought this an odious and insupportable privation; she cared nothing for any other walk. I must go along with her and scale the walls of the forbidden garden. The guard came, with his musket, and begged us to go out; she paid no regard to him. He levelled his piece at me; she watched my countenance. I went up to him, and proudly slipped a crown into his hand, though without her perceiving it, for she would have thought it a mark of weakness. At length she took her voluntary departure, and we retired without any noise, but slowly, and in good order.

Another time she came and, with an alarmed look, showed me a letter, real or fabricated, from an unfortunate and jealous lover, who, enraged at my happiness, threatened to avenge her disdain upon my person. After giving me this letter, she marked if I read it with emotion—for she valued nothing so much as courage, and any apparent symptoms of fear would have ruined me in her estimation.

No sooner had I passed through one trial than she contrived another, and never left me a moment to breathe. But of all the situations into which she brought me, the following was the most critical. Her father, learning that she had a young man living with her, had written a reproachful letter. She gave me an exaggerated description of his anger. By her own account, she was undone; her father would come immediately and turn us out of doors. There was just one way, she said, of pacifying him, which was in my power, but which she would rather die than mention; my love for her alone could enable me to find it out. I understood her perfectly; but though in her presence I forgot all the rest of the world, I did not so easily forget what I owed to myself. I adored her as a mistress, but would have nothing to do with her as a wife. I wrote to M. Navarre, expatiating on the perfections of his daughter, and expressing the purest esteem, the most innocent friendship for her; but went no further. The good man replied that, if my designs were honourable—as she, apparently, had given him to understand—there was no sacrifice which he would not readily make for our happiness. In my reply I laid great stress upon my esteem, upon my friendship, upon the perfections of his daughter; I made no allusion to anything further. I have reason to believe that she was piqued; and, either out of revenge for the refusal of her hand, or with the view of discovering what character my love would assume in a fit of jealousy, she chose the most keen and piercing dart with which to rend my heart. In one of those moments when I had reason to believe her wholly occupied with me, as I was with her, she pronounced the name of my rival, of that jealous rival with whom she had threatened me. I heard from her lips: "*Ah! my dear Betisi.*" Conceive, if possible, the fury which seized me. I rushed out like a madman, and, calling loudly for her servants, ordered post-horses instantly. But scarce was I shut up in my room to prepare for setting out, than she flew to the door, tearing her hair; then, knocking with frightful violence, and the most piercing cries, she forced me to open it. Certainly, if her only object was to see a wretch out of his senses, her triumph was complete. But she was terrified at the condition into which she had thrown me, and now appeared casting herself in despair at my feet, and asking forgiveness for an error of which her tongue alone, she said, was guilty; but to which neither her thoughts nor her heart had consented. It seems hardly credible that this scene could be acted, and, at that time, such a thought never occurred to me. But the more I have reflected since on the inconceivable eccentricity of this romantic character, the more possible it has appeared that she had wished to see me in this new situation; but that afterwards, affected by the violence of my grief, she had been inclined to moderate it. Never, at least, did I see her so feeling and so beautiful as at this dreadful moment. Accordingly, after having been for some time inexorable, I at length allowed myself to be mollified and persuaded. But her father, a few days after, having recalled her to Brussels, we were under the necessity of separating. We took leave, promising solemnly always to love each other; and, hoping soon to meet with her again, I returned to Paris.

The cause of my retirement was no longer a secret; a ballad-monger, the Abbé de Lattaignant, being then at Rheims, of which place he was canon, had learned my adventure, and had made it the subject of a poem to Mademoiselle Navarre. This poem was handed about town, and I thus acquired a reputation for successful gallantry which I would willingly have dispensed with, for it made many envious of me, and consequently my enemies.

The day after my arrival I had a call from my two Gascon abbés, of the Rue des Mathurins, and received a most serio-comic admonition. "Where have you been?" said the Abbé Forest. "Pretty conduct, indeed! You make off, like a robber, without a single farewell to your best friends! You set out for Champagne. Your friends sought you everywhere, but sought in vain. Where is he? Nobody knew anything about him. And, in this manner, you could abandon a woman so interesting and so full of sensibility; you could leave her alarmed and weeping. What barbarous conduct! Go, you libertine! you do not deserve the love she has for you." "Pray, sir," said I, "who is this Ariadne in tears? Of whom are you speaking?" "Whom!" replied the Abbé Debon, "why, of the despairing mistress, who, thinking you drowned, had search made for you in the very fishing-nets of St. Cloud, but learned afterwards that you had betrayed her; in short, of Mademoiselle Denis." "Gentlemen," said I, firmly and seriously, "Mademoiselle Denis is my friend, but nothing more. She has no right to complain of my conduct. I kept it a secret from her, as well as from you, because it was proper to do so." "Ay, a secret indeed!" replied Forest, "about Mademoiselle Navarre, about a——" "Very good, sir," said I, interrupting him, "you do not mean, I suppose, to offend me; but if you were to go further you would do so. I never took the liberty of censuring you, and beg you will follow the same rule with me." "Indeed," replied Forest, "you talk very much at your ease. You set out gaily to drink the finest champagne in the world, in company with a charming girl, and leave us to pay for the broken bottles. We are accused of being your accomplices. Madame Denis herself views us with an unfavourable eye, receives us coldly; in short," continued he, in a pathetic tone, "since we must tell all, she gives us no more suppers. The poor woman is in the deepest affliction." "Oh! I understand you; here, then," said I, "is the high crime committed by my absence. Upon my word, I no longer wonder at your giving me so violent a scold. No more suppers! Come, come, you must have them again. You shall be invited to-morrow." An air of rejoicing appeared on their visages. "So you believe," said one of them, "that we shall now be forgiven?" "Yes," said the other, "she is a good woman; our peace will soon be made." "The peace of friendship," said I, "must always be easily made. It is otherwise with love; and the total absence of that passion from our quarrel will be proved by no trace of it remaining to-morrow. Adieu; I am going to call on Madame Denis."

She received me with some degree of anger, and complained of the anxiety which my scamper had occasioned to her, as well as to all my friends. I endured her reproaches, and acknowledged that a young man at my age was liable to weakness and folly. As to keeping my journey secret, I was commanded to do so; it would have been wrong in me to disclose it. "Now, madam," continued I, "do not appear to be offended; you would be thought jealous, and you ought rather to contradict than strengthen such a rumour." "Contradict it!" said she, "can it have begun to spread?" "Not yet," said I, "but your discarded guests might possibly give it currency. I have just seen two of them, this morning, who have been exceedingly angry with me, and insist, from the interruption of your suppers, that you must be in despair." I told her what had passed; she laughed, and saw that it was really advisable to invite them without delay, lest she should still be considered as "an Ariadne in tears." "Now this," said I, "is what I call friendship, quiet, indulgent and always unaltered; those who enjoy it spend their whole life satisfied, happy and in good agreement; whereas love——" "Love!" cried she, "heaven preserve me from ever feeling it. Love does very well for tragedy, but the comic style is the one for me. You, indeed, must learn to express the fury, the agonies and transports of tragic love, and, for that purpose, you need some person to instruct you. I congratulate you on having, as I understand, provided yourself very well in that respect."

Ah! yes, I knew already, by fatal experience, that the passion of love, even when apparently happy, is yet a violent and painful condition. But, till then, I had known only the least of its troubles; a much longer and severer punishment was now awaiting me.

The first letter I received from Mademoiselle Navarre was animated and tender; the second, though still tender, was less animated; the third was long of arriving, and it showed only the pale embers of an expiring flame. I complained; and to this complaint she replied only by slight excuses. "Entertainments, public places, company to see," were the alleged causes of this negligence and coldness. "I should know women; amusement and dissipation were so charming to them that, in absence, at least, they must be allowed to enjoy them." Then, indeed, I began to experience the true miseries of love. I wrote three eager and imploring letters—but no answer. This silence appeared, at first, so incomprehensible that, after hearing from the postman the overwhelming words "Nothing for you," I went myself to the post-office to see whether some letter, addressed to me, had not been left by mistake; nay, after being there once, I returned again. Daily deceived in this continual expectation, I wasted and pined away and consumed myself with grief.

I forgot to mention that one day, after my arrival at Paris, as I was passing by the cloister of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, an old picture of Cleopatra struck me as resembling Mademoiselle Navarre. I immediately bought it, carried it home and made it my only consolation. I shut myself up with this picture, and, sighing to it, asked, in pity, a few lines to restore me to life. Fool that I was to think that this image could have heard me! But she, whom it resembled, was equally insensible. Such excessive rigour and disdain did not seem natural. I thought either that she must be ill or that her father locked her up and watched her like a criminal. Everything appeared possible, nay, probable, except the dreadful truth.

Notwithstanding the pains I took to conceal my grief, Mademoiselle Clairon had made me acknowledge the cause, and had employed every method she could imagine to flatter and soothe me. One evening, when we were in the green-room at the theatre, she heard the Marquis of Brancas-Cereste saying that he was just come from Brussels. "My lord marquis," said she, "may I ask if you saw Mademoiselle Navarre?" "Yes," said he, "I saw her, more beautiful and more brilliant than ever, leading the Chevalier de Mirabeau chained to her car. She is fond of him, and he adores her." I was present; I heard this answer. My heart was stunned with the blow. I went home and fell down like a sacrificed victim. Oh! my children, how very foolish it is for a young man to hope fidelity from a woman already noted for her frailty, and whom pleasure has once seduced to renounce her honour.

Yet she was rather romantic than abandoned, and seemed to have changed her character in her amours with the Chevalier de Mirabeau. But the romance did not last long, and its end was miserable.

I was still confined with a fever (which seized me the very evening on which I learned my misfortune) when, one morning, a handsome young stranger came into my room and told me his name. He was the Chevalier de Mirabeau. "Sir," said he, "I introduce myself to you under two characters. First, as the intimate friend of your deceased friend, the Marquis de Vauvenargue, who was my old brother officer in the King's regiment. It is my wish, and will be my pride, to deserve and to obtain the place he held in your affection. My other character is not equally favourable—it is as your successor in the favour of Mademoiselle Navarre. I must witness for her that she feels the most tender esteem for you. I myself have often been jealous of the manner in which she talked of you; and, at my departure from Brussels, she particularly urged me to call upon you and ask your friendship."

"Chevalier," replied I, "you see I am ill; it is you that have made me so; and, to confess the truth, I do not feel myself disposed to form so sudden a friendship with a man from whose too agreeable qualities I have suffered so much. But the frank and honourable manner in which you introduce yourself, inspires me with a great esteem for you; and, since I am sacrificed, there is some consolation in its being to such a man. Be so good as to sit down. We will talk of our friend, M. de Vauvenargue; we will talk also of Mademoiselle Navarre, and I will say nothing but what is favourable of both."

After this conversation, which was long and interesting, he said: "I hope you will not be offended by learning that Mademoiselle Navarre has given me your letters. Here they are; they are alike honourable to your heart and understanding. I am desired to give them up to you and receive hers in return." "Pray, sir," said I, "has she been kind enough to write a few words authorising me to put them into your hands?" "No," said he, "we both thought you would take it upon my word." "Excuse me," said I; "I would readily entrust you with anything of my own, but I will not lightly disclose the secret of another. However, there is one way of bringing the matter to an agreement, and you shall be satisfied." I then drew from my scrutoire the packet of Mademoiselle Navarre's letters, saying: "You know her handwriting, and see that I abstract nothing from this collection; you will be able to say that her letters have been burned." I immediately threw them into the fire along with my own, and added, as they were burning together: "I have fulfilled my duty; my sacrifice is completed." He approved my delicacy and went away quite satisfied.

The fever had not left me; I was melancholy; I would no longer see anyone. I felt it necessary to breathe a purer air than that of the Louvre, and I wished, also, to have access to a solitary walk during my convalescence. I went, therefore, to lodge in the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg.

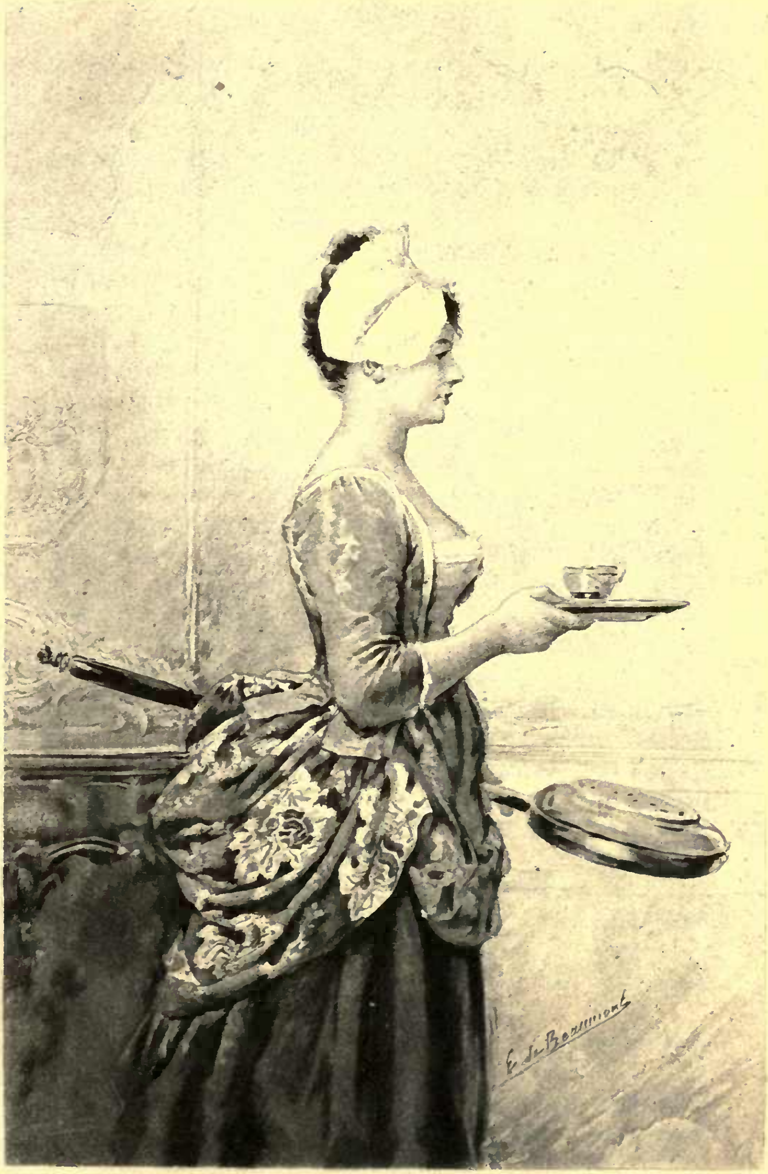
One morning during my stay there, while I was still sick in bed and the Savoyard who served me was absent, I heard somebody enter my room. "Who is there?" I asked. No answer was given, but the curtains of my alcove were half-opened, and, everything being still dark, I felt myself embraced by a lady, who, pressing her face to mine, bathed me in tears. I again asked: "Who are you?" But she, without answering, redoubles her embraces, her sighs and her tears. At length she rises and shows me Mademoiselle Navarre in a morning dress. Grief and tears rendered her more beautiful than ever. "Madam," cried I, "can it be you? What motive brings you hither? Do you wish to be the occasion of my death?" No sooner had I said these words than I perceived the Chevalier de Mirabeau standing behind her, silent and motionless. I thought myself raving. But she, turning to him, said, with a tragic air: "See, sir, the man, whom I sacrifice to you; the most ardent and faithful lover, the tenderest and best of friends; see the condition to which my love for you has reduced him. How criminal would you be, were you ever to make yourself unworthy of such a sacrifice." The chevalier was struck dumb with astonishment and admiration. She then asked me if I was able to rise. "Yes," said I. "Well, rise and give us breakfast, for we wish your advice on matters of great importance, which we have to communicate."

I rose, and when my Savoyard returned, caused him to bring coffee. As soon as we were alone, she began, "My friend, the chevalier, and I are about to render our love sacred at the altar; we are going to marry, not in France, for there we should meet with many difficulties, but in Holland, where we shall be free. Marshal Saxe is raging with jealousy; read the letter he has written to me. The chevalier is there treated very slightingly; but he will bring him to account." I represented that a jealous lover was not bound to be just towards his rival, and that it was neither prudent nor possible to attack Marshal Saxe. "What do you mean by attacking?" said she, "a duel, sword in hand? That is not the thing; you do not understand me. The chevalier, after his marriage, is to enter into the service of some foreign power. He is well known, and can make his choice. His reputation, his valour, his talents, and his appearance, will secure to him a rapid promotion; we shall soon see him at the head of armies; and, in a field of battle, he may try his strength with the marshal." "Excellent, madam," said I; "I quite approve of this plan, and recognise you both in so spirited a scheme." Indeed, I saw them as proud and as well satisfied with their resolution, as if it were to be executed next day. I afterwards learned that, after their marriage in Holland, they had gone to Avignon; that the brother of the chevalier, the pretended friend of mankind, and the enemy of his own brother, had possessed interest sufficient to drive him for shelter into the Pope's dominions; that, at the time when the *sbirri* came to arrest him, by order of the vice-legate, his wife was in child-bed, and the terror with which she was seized, on seeing them enter her house, threw her into so violent an agitation as brought on her death.

I wept for her; and, since that time, this friend of mankind, whom I discovered to be a hypocrite in morality, and a proud and malevolent Court intriguer, became my mortal aversion.

I cannot express the almost immediate change which took place in my mind on learning that the Chevalier de Mirabeau was so much attached to Mademoiselle Navarre as to make her his wife. My love, and, above all, my jealousy, was at once cured. The preference she had given him appeared just and natural; and, far from being mortified, I considered myself as doing a virtuous action in resigning her; and thereby

MADAME HAUSSET
WAITING MAID OF MADAME DE POMADOUR


E de Beaumont

recognised how much the anger and sorrow of love arose from the selfish feeling of wounded vanity.

Yet there remained at the bottom of my heart an uneasiness and ennui which I could not shake off. The picture of Cleopatra, though still before my eyes, had lost it resemblance; it no longer affected me, but it caused a disagreeable sensation, and I got it removed. This sadness was augmented by the loss of my poetical powers. Amid the delights and the torments of Avenay, I had still hours of inspiration in which I could compose. Mademoiselle Navarre herself urged me to employ them. As she was afraid of thunder, we were obliged on stormy days either to dine or sup in her cellars (which belonged to the marshal), and amid fifty thousand bottles of champagne, my brain could hardly fail to get heated. On these days, indeed, my verses were full of fumes; but these were dissipated by reflection. As I proceeded, I read my new scenes to her. In order to sit in judgment on them, she ascended what she called her throne; it was a hillock of turf, rising above the vineyards, and surrounded by a few shrubs. I wish you had seen, in her letters, the description of this throne, which, she said, awaited us; that of Armida was not fuller of enchantment. There, sitting at her feet, I read my verses, which, when approved by her, seemed the finest in the world. But now that the charm was broken, and I saw myself alone in the world, the paths of the tragic art, instead of flowers, were, for me, strewed only with thorns. I was forsaken by the muse that inspired me; my genius and my soul sunk languishing, like the sails of a ship when the wind which swelled them has suddenly failed.

Mademoiselle Clairon, who saw the languor into which I was fallen, sought anxiously to cure it. "My friend," said she, "your heart needs some object of love; you feel listless because it is empty. You must interest, must fill it. Is there not a woman in the world whom you can think agreeable?" "I know," said I, "only one who could comfort me, if she chose; but would she be so generous?" "We must see as to that," replied she, with a smile. "Am I acquainted with her; I will try to assist you." "Yes, you know her, and have great influence over her." "Well, what is her name? I will speak in your favour; I will say that you love with ardour and sincerity; that you can be faithful and constant; and that she is sure of being happy in your love." "So you really believe all this?" "Yes, I am fully persuaded of it." "Be so good, then, as to say it to yourself." "To me, my friend?" "To yourself." "Ah, then, it shall be my pride to comfort you."

A new connection was thus formed, which, as may be easily supposed, was not of long duration; but it had the good effect of rekindling my poetical ardour. Never did love and the passion for glory form a closer union than in my heart.

Dionysius was again acted, and with the same success as at its first appearance. The part of Areta was sensibly improved by the additional interest with which it was performed by her, to whom nothing was dearer than my glory. She was more sublime, more transporting than ever. Imagine the pleasure with which the author and actress, both applauded, went to sup together.

I had such an enthusiastic admiration of Clairon's powers, that, in my passion for her, it was impossible to distinguish that part which did not belong to love. But, independently of the charms of the actress, her brilliant youth, her liveliness and gaiety rendered her a very desirable mistress. She had all the charms of an agreeable character without any mixture of caprice; while her only desire, her most delicate attentions, were directed towards rendering her lover happy. So long as she loved, no one could love more faithfully or more tenderly than she. I could depend upon her as fully as upon myself; so that, being free from all anxiety, I spent part of the day in composition and reserved the other for her. I left her charming; I found her equally, and, if possible, still more charming. What a pity that, with so seducing a character, so much levity should be joined, and that love so sincere, and even so faithful, should not have been more constant!

She had a friend, with whom we sometimes supped. One day, she said to me: "Do not come this evening; you would find it unpleasant; the Bailli de Fleuri is to sup there, and will take me home with him." "Oh," said I, with the greatest simplicity, "I am acquainted with him; he will be very willing to take me home, too." "No," said she, "he will have only a *vis-à-vis*." At this word, light broke in upon me. Seeing my astonishment, she said: "Well, well, my friend, it is a fancy I have taken; you must just excuse it." "Can it be possible," said I, "that you are serious?" "Yes, I am sometimes a fool; but I will never deceive you." "I am obliged to you," said I, "and yield my place to M. le Bailli." On this occasion, I felt courage and judgment; and an event which happened next day, taught me that a virtuous sentiment was much better suited, and more agreeable to my heart, than a frivolous and transient inclination.

Rigal, an advocate from my province, called upon me, and said: "Mademoiselle B—— promised never to marry without your mother's consent. Though your mother is no more, Mademoiselle B—— is not the less faithful to her promise. A suitable match is proposed to her, but she will accept none without your consent." At these words, I felt a revival, not of my former love, but of an inclination so warm, tender, and pleasing, as I could not have resisted, had my fortune and situation in life possessed the requisite stability. "Alas!" said I, "why do not my circumstances allow me to oppose the engagement, into which my dear B—— is desired to enter? But, unhappily, the lot I could offer is too vague and uncertain. My future prospects are liable to risks, on which hers ought not to depend. She deserves a solid happiness, and I can only envy him who is able to secure it to her."

Some days after, I received from Mademoiselle Clairon, a note expressed in the following terms: "I need your friendship just now, and know you too well not to reckon upon it. I expect you to call upon me." I went to her house; there was company. She immediately said: "I have something to say to you;" and I followed her into her closet. "You inform me, madam," said I, "that my friendship can, in some way, be useful to you; let me know how, and you may be assured of my zeal." "It is not your zeal, nor your friendship alone that I wish," said she, "you must restore me your love." Then, with an ingenuousness, which, to any other person, would have been diverting, she told me how little that puppet, the Bailli de Fleuri, had been worthy of my jealousy. After this humble acknowledgment, she employed all the seductive arts of an agreeable coquette, in order to regain a heart, whose love reflection had extinguished.

I then said to her: "You have not deceived me; I will be equally sincere, and will consider it as my duty not to deceive you. We are formed by Nature to be friends, and such, if you please, we will continue during our whole life; but we must no longer be lovers." I shall not enlarge on a dialogue which, on my side, led always to this invariable conclusion. Yet the sad and confused state in which I left her appeared to me somewhat too severe a revenge.

Having finished *Aristomenes*, I read it to the performers. Mademoiselle Clairon behaved with a cold dignity at this recitation. The knowledge which the other performers had of our quarrel, only made their applause the louder. They were curious to see whether or not I would give her the part of the wife of Aristomenes. She, too, was anxious on the subject, especially when she learned that the other parts were distributed. At last she received hers; and, a quarter of an hour after, she called upon me with one of her friends. "Take it, sir," said she, entering with her theatrical air, and throwing the manuscript, which had been sent her, on the table, "I won't have the part without the author; the one belongs to me as well as the other." I embraced her, and said: "My dear friend, in that character, I am yours; ask no more. Any other sentiment would render us both unhappy." "He is in the right," said she, to her companion, "my foolish head would torment us both. Well, my friend, come and dine with your good friend." From that moment the most perfect intimacy was established between us; it has continued unaltered during thirty years; and, though my new mode of life has removed us from each other, no material change has taken place in our mutual sentiments.

This frank and steady friendship which reigned between us led to one occurrence, which ought not to be overlooked.

Mademoiselle Clairon, being neither opulent nor economical, was often in want of money. One day, she said: "I need twelve louis; can you supply me?" "No, I have not that sum." "See if you can get it, and bring it, this evening, to my box at the theatre." Presently I set out in the chase. I had many wealthy acquaintances, but to them I did not choose to apply. I went to my Gascon abbés, and some others of that description, but found their purses all empty. Much disappointed, I went to Mademoiselle Clairon's box, and found her *tête-à-tête* with the Duke de Duras. "You are very late," said she. "I have been in quest," said I, "of some money which is due to me, but have found my trouble thrown away." After saying these words, which were well understood, I was going to seat myself in the amphitheatre, when I heard somebody calling upon me by name from the end of the corridor. On turning round, I saw the Duke de Duras coming to me, and saying, "I have just heard you mention that you are in want of money; how much have you occasion for?" At these words he drew his purse. I thanked him, saying that my wants were not pressing. "This is not answering me," said he; "what is the sum you expected to receive?" I at length said it was twelve louis. "Here they are," said he, "on condition that, whenever you have the least occasion you will apply to me." And, when I urged him to take them back: "Well," said he, "since you make a point of it, I take them, but remember, the purse into which I put them is yours." I made no use of this credit, but since that time he has shown me every sort of kindness. We were afterwards joint members of the French Academy, and I had always reason to be pleased with his conduct, for he gladly embraced every opportunity of doing me a service. When I dined with him he always gave me his best champagne, and, even during his fits of the gout, he expressed pleasure at seeing me. He was said to be fickle, but this he certainly never was towards me.

To return to *Aristomenes*. Voltaire, who was then at Paris, wished to hear my play before it was acted, and I had read him four acts, with which he was pleased. But he was anxious about the act that was still to be composed, and not without reason. In the four acts which he had heard, the story appeared, from one end to the other, to be complete and unbroken. "What!" said he, after I had done, "do you pretend, in this your second tragedy, to shake off the common rule? I, indeed, composed the *Death of Cæsar* in three acts, but it was for a college, and my excuse was the being obliged to introduce only men. But for you, upon the great theatre, and in a subject where you are under no restraint, to present a mutilated play, in four acts, when you have no example for so singular a form! This, at your age, is an unhappy license, which I cannot excuse." "Accordingly," said I, "it is a license which I have no intention of taking. My play, as I have contrived it, consists of five acts, and I hope to have them all well filled up." "But how?" inquired he, "I have heard the last act; all the others regularly follow each other, and you surely have no intention of taking up the story earlier." "No," replied I, "the story will begin and end as you have seen; the rest is still a secret with me. Perhaps my design is foolish, but, however dangerous the experiment may be, still I must make it, and, were you to discourage me, my labour would be all lost." "Well, my good fellow, go on; venture! be daring!—that is always a good sign. In our art, as in that of war, there may be a fortunate temerity; and the greatest beauties often spring up from under the most discouraging difficulties."

On the first day of representation he was so good as to sit behind me in the box; and his emotion and trembling anxiety were almost equal to mine. "Now," said he, "before the curtain rises, tell me how you have made out the act that was wanting?" I reminded him that at the close of the second act it was said that the wife and son of Aristomenes were about to be tried, and that at the opening of the third their condemnation was announced. "Well," said I, "this trial was formerly supposed to happen between the acts, but now it is introduced on the scene." "What!" cried he, "a criminal trial on the stage? I tremble." "Yes," said I, "it is a dangerous defile; but there was no shunning it. Clairon must save me."

Aristomenes was nearly as successful as *Dionysius;* and, at every applause it received, Voltaire locked me in his arms. But he was astonished and leaped for joy at the effect of the third act. When he saw Leonide, loaded with chains, appear like a criminal in the presence of her judges, and then, by the grandeur of her character, confound them and obtain full possession of the scene and of the soul of the spectators; when he saw her distinguish the virtuous friends of Aristomenes from his treacherous enemies, and overwhelm the latter with the conviction of their baseness, Voltaire, amid the applause with which the house resounded, exclaimed: "Bravo, Clairon! Macte animo, generose puer!"[1]

No one, assuredly, can be more sensible than I, how little, in point of talent, I was worthy of his envy. Yet my success was sufficiently great to have rendered him jealous had he been capable of that weakness. No! Voltaire was too sensible of his own superiority to dread vulgar talents. A new Corneille, perhaps, or a new Racine, might have vexed him; but it was not so easy, as men suppose, to trouble the author of *Zara*, of *Alzira*, of *Merope*, and of *Mahomet*.

At this first representation of *Aristomenes* I was again obliged to show myself on the theatre; but on the following nights, my friends gave me courage to withdraw myself from the public acclamations.

An accident interrupted my success and my pleasure. Roselli, the actor of whom I formerly spoke, performed the part of Arcires, the friend of Aristomenes, and performed it with equal warmth and intelligence. Neither his face nor his figure were good, he had even a very sensible lisp in his pronunciation; but he atoned amply for these faults by the propriety of his action, and by an expression full of intelligence and animation. I ascribed to him the success which attended the catastrophe of my tragedy. It was determined in the following manner:—Speaking, in the last scene, of the decree by which the senate had filled up the measure of their atrocity, he said:

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[1] See note (4) at the end.

"Theonis le defend, et s'en nomme l'auteur."[1]

Having then perceived that the public indignation was rising, he, instantly, and in the most animated manner, advanced towards the pit and cried out, as if to appease them:

"Je me lance et lui plonge un poignard dans le cœur."[2]

The attitude, the gesture which accompanied these words, made them feel as if they saw Theonis struck; and a burst of joy resounded through the whole house.

Now, after the sixth representation of my play, I was informed that Roselli was seized with an inflammation in his breast, and an actor was proposed whom I knew to be wholly incapable of filling his place. It was a very great loss to me to interrupt such crowded houses; but I should have thought it a much greater evil to degrade my work. I required that the representations should be suspended till the health of Roselli was restored; nor, till the following winter, did *Aristomenes* again appear on the stage.

On the first night of this new representation, the public, with lively emotion, again called for the author. I declined to appear on the stage; but I was in the back seat of a box. Someone, who was sitting in the pit, having discovered me, cried out: "There he is!" It was a front box; the whole pit faced about; I was obliged to come forward, and, by a low bow, to acknowledge this new favour.

The man who to took me in his arms and brought me to the front of his box, in order to present me to the audience, was M. de la Popliniere. He will occupy a considerable place in these Memoirs, both from the injury he did, while wishing my good, and from the alluring and treacherous pleasures which I found in his society. Ever since the success of *Dionysius*, he had welcomed me to his house. But, at the period I am speaking of, I was much affected by his generosity in offering me a secure retreat, at the risk of displeasing a very powerful man whom I had offended. The danger from which he freed me was occasioned by one of those youthful adventures in which my imprudence involved me, and which may teach my children to be wiser than I.

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[1] "Theonis forbids it, and names himself as the author."

[2] "I spring forward and plunge a dagger into his heart."

BOOK IV

During the time that I lodged in the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg, I was acquainted with an old actress belonging to the *opéra-comique*, and a friend of Mademoiselle Clairon, called La Darimat. She had married Durancy, a comic performer in a provincial company; and, being brought to bed at Paris, had prevailed on her friend to stand godmother to her child, while I was taken as godfather. It happened, in consequence of this christening, that Madame Durancy, who sometimes heard me at Mademoiselle Clairon's house discoursing on the art of theatrical performance, one day said to me: "Shall I give you a young and handsome actress to form? She aims at making her appearance in tragedy; and she deserves any trouble you may take in instructing her. Her name is Mademoiselle Verriere; she is under the protection of Marshal Saxe. She is a neighbour of yours. Her conduct is correct, and she lives in a very proper manner with her mother and sister. The marshal having, as you know, gone to visit the King of Prussia, we wish that at his return he should have the pleasure of finding his favourite on the stage, performing Zara and Iphigenia better than Mademoiselle Gaussin. If you will undertake to instruct her, you shall be installed to-morrow. We will dine with her together.

My adventure with Mademoiselle Navarre had not alienated Marshal Saxe from me. He had even expressed kindness for me; and, before *Aristomenes* appeared on the stage, had asked me to come and read it to him. This recitation was performed by ourselves, and he was interested. The part of Aristomenes particularly affected him; that of Leonide, he thought, would have a good theatrical effect. "But, zounds!" said he, "what a strange woman—I would not have her on any account. This was his only criticism. In other respects, he was satisfied, and expressed it with that blunt and generous frankness which suited a hero.

I was delighted, therefore, to have an opportunity of doing anything agreeable to him ; and most innocently, though most imprudently, accepted the proposal.

This favourite of the marshal was one of his mistresses, who had been given to him at the age of seventeen. He had a daughter by her, who has since been acknowledged, and married under the name of Aurore de Saxe. At the birth of this child, he had settled on the mother an annuity of a hundred louis, and gave her, besides, five hundred a year for current expenses. He entertained a sincere friendship for her ; but she was no longer admitted to his parties of pleasure. The mild and ingenuous timidity of her character now appeared to him insipid. It is well known that Marshal Saxe, along with much dignity and pride, had also a great inclination for coarse mirth. From taste, as well as system, he wished his armies to be merry ; saying, that the French never fought so well as when they were led on gaily, and that, in going to war, the thing they dreaded most was ennui. He kept always an *opéra-comique* in his camp ; and it was there that he gave the order of battle. On those days the principal actress used to come forward and say, "Gentlemen, there will be no play to-morrow because the marshal gives battle ; on the day after, the *Village Cock*, the *Merry Intrigues*," &c.

Two performers belonging to this theatre, called Chantilly and Beaumenard, were his favourite mistresses ; and he declared that their rivalry and caprice plagued him more than the Queen of Hungary's hussars. I have read these words in one of his letters. For them it was that he neglected Mademoiselle Navarre, whom he found too haughty, not sufficiently complaisant and yielding. Mademoiselle Verriere, who was infinitely less artful, did not even aim at keeping her ground against these rivals; she seemed to trust for pleasing entirely to her beauty, and assisted it only by a character uniformly amiable, and by indolently allowing herself to be beloved.

The first scenes that we repeated together were those of Zara with Orosman. Her figure and voice, the sensibility, the candour and modesty which appeared on her aspect, were perfectly suited to her character; while, in mine, there was but too much vehemence and warmth. At our second lesson, on coming to the words, "Zara, you weep!" there was an end of my good behaviour.

The docility of my scholar made me assiduous; and my attention became so extraordinary, as to give rise to ill-natured comments. The marshal was then in Prussia; and, on learning our intimacy, fell into a passion unworthy of so great a man. The fifty louis, which Mademoiselle Verriere received monthly, were stopped; and he declared that never again in his life would he see either mother or daughter. He kept his word; nor was it, till after his death, and somewhat through my mediation, that Aurora was owned, and educated in a convent, as the daughter of this hero.

The deserted state in which my Zara was left, overwhelmed us both with grief. I begged her to accept forty louis, which remained of the produce of my tragedy. But Mademoiselle Clairon, and all our friends, advised us, for some time, at least, to give up seeing each other. And we followed this advice, though it cost us many tears.

The marshal returned; and I heard from all quarters that he was furious. Marshal Loewendal, and two of his other friends, Sourdes and Flavacourt, have since told me how difficult they found it to moderate his anger. He went about in every company, at Court, and to the King himself, saying that this little insolent fellow of a poet took all his mistresses from him (though I had only those whom he forsook). He showed a note of mine, which had been stolen by a treacherous footman from Mademoiselle Verriere. It luckily happened that, in this note (talking of the tragedy of *Cleopatra* in which I was employed), I had said that Antony was "a hero in love as well as in war." "Now," said the marshal, "you understand very well who this Antony is." This allusion, which I certainly had never thought of, flattered and soothed him a little.

Nevertheless, my terrors were rendered more dreadful by the determination I had formed, had he insulted me, to be revenged on him at the risk of my life. In this situation, one of the most painful I have ever experienced, M. de la Popeliniere proposed that I should retire with him to the country; while, from another quarter, the Prince de Turenne relieved my affliction at the unfortunate situation in which my Zara was left.

This Prince, meeting me one evening in the green-room of the Comédie Françoise, came up and said: "Marshal Saxe has left Mademoiselle Verriere on your account. Will you promise not to see her again? In that case, her misfortune shall be repaired." This explained the mysterious rendezvous she had given me the evening before in the Bois de Boulogne, and the tears she had shed at bidding me farewell. "Yes," replied I, "I give the promise Your Highness requires. May Mademoiselle Verriere be happy with you. I will see her no more." She became his mistress, and I was faithful to my promise.

I now retired, almost alone, to the country-house of La Popeliniere, which was then very different from what it had been and afterwards became. I had full time to reflect on my own conduct. I contemplated the gulf along whose brink I had passed. It was the hero of Fontenoy, the man whom the first nobility in the kingdom viewed with respect, and whom the King himself treated with every distinction which can flatter a great man—it was he whom I had offended, without even the excuse of being led astray by a foolish passion. This weak and imprudent girl had made no secret of the favours she received from him, and of his being the father of her child. I was so well informed, and so fully convinced of the tremendous risk which we both incurred, that I never stole into her house at improper hours without trembling. I found and left her trembling still more. There is no pleasure which would not have been purchased too dear by our continual fears of discovery. And, when the marshal learned my temerity, though he might disdain to take my life, yet, had he only caused me to be insulted by one of his footmen, I had, in that case, formed a resolution which I cannot think of without shuddering. Ah! my children, shudder, like me, at the dangers into which a too ardent youth made me run for the sake of an accidental and transient intercourse, induced only by the allurement of pleasure and opportunity. I have pointed out this hidden rock in order to preserve you from shipwreck.

Shortly after, the marshal died. He behaved in the end magnanimously towards me, as the lion in the fable did towards the mouse. At the first appearance of *Cleopatra*, happening, as he left his box, to meet me full in the face (a meeting which turned me pale), he was good enough to express his approbation in these words: "Very well done, sir; very well." In him I sincerely lamented the defender of my country and the man who had generously pardoned myself; and in order, as far as lay in my power, to honour his memory, I wrote the following epitaph:—

"A Courtray Fabius, Annibal à Bruxelles,
Sur la Meuse Condé, Turenne sur le Rhin,
Au leopard farouche il imposa le frein,
Et de l'aigle rapide il abattit les ailes."[1]

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[1] "At Courtray Fabius, Annibal at Brussels, upon the Meuse Condé, Turenne on the Rhine; he gave reins to the fierce leopard, and stopped the rapid wings of the eagle."

The retreat in which I saved myself from the temptations of Paris was soon to present me with others, but at that time it yielded only serious moral lessons. That you may know the cause of the silent and gloomy sadness which reigned in a place which had formerly been the abode of pleasure, I must recur for a moment to what was past, and mention how this enchantment had been formed and dissolved.

M. de la Popeliniere was not the richest, but he was the most splendid financier of his time. He had taken the daughter of an actress, first for his mistress, and afterwards for his wife. Not that he had intended to marry her, but she compelled him to in the following manner: The celebrated Madame de Tencin, having raised her brother to the dignity of cardinal, and introduced him into the Council of State, had, through him, a secret but powerful influence over old Cardinal Fleury. Mademoiselle Daucour got herself introduced to that lady, and, assuming the character of an artless young girl, complained that La Popeliniere, after first seducing her by the hope of marriage, had given up all thoughts of performing his promise. "He shall perform it," said Madame de Tencin. "But do not tell him you have seen me; dissemble with him."

The critical moment drew near when the farms of the revenue were to be let anew, and all the old farmers-general were striving who should be retained on the list. Cardinal Fleury was informed that now was the time to put a stop to a scandal which afflicted every person of worth. Mademoiselle Daucour was represented as an interesting victim of seduction, and La Popeliniere as one of those men who laugh at the promises by which they have surprised the artless credulity of innocence.

That a financier should publicly keep a mistress was yet a luxury unauthorised by custom, and the cardinal prided himself on being a supporter of good morals. When La Popeliniere, therefore, went to solicit his interest for the new leases, the cardinal asked him about Mademoiselle Daucour. "She is a young person whom I have taken charge of," replied La Popeliniere; and he then began to extol her understanding, her talents, and her good education. "I am very glad," replied the cardinal, "to hear you say so much good of her. This is just what everybody tells me, and the King, therefore, intends to give your place to whoever shall marry her. It is quite just that, after seducing her, you should leave as her marriage portion the fortune which, in consequence of your promise, she had a right to expect from yourself." Popeliniere attempted to deny his ever having formed such an engagement. But the minister insisted. "You have ruined her; were it not for you she had still been innocent. You must atone for this injury. This is the advice I give you, and unless you follow it without delay I can do nothing for you." To lose his place, or marry—the alternative was urgent. Popeliniere took the side which was least disagreeable. But he was desirous that this forced resolution should have the appearance of being voluntary. Next day, therefore, as Mademoiselle Daucour awoke, he said: "Rise, and come with your mother to a place to which I will conduct you." She obeyed. "Listen," said he, "to the deed which we are going to sign." It was the contract of marriage. The drama seemed to produce its effect. The daughter pretended to faint; the mother clasped the knees of him who thus completed his kindness, and fulfilled their wishes. He took the full enjoyment of their feigned gratitude, and so long as he could amuse himself with the hope of being beloved, his house appeared embellished by the charms of his brilliant partner. The highest company attended his suppers and balls. But anxieties and jealous suspicions soon disturbed his quiet. His wife had taken her flight. Carried into a vortex where he could not follow, she went without him to evening parties; and people took an ill-natured pleasure in informing him, by anonymous letters, that he was laughed at by that brilliant court which his wife kept at his house. It was at this time that he began to invite me, though at first only to select parties. There I met the celebrated Rameau ; Latour, the ablest of all our painters in crayons ; Vaucanson, that wonderful mechanic ; Carle-Vanloo, the great designer and painter, and his wife, who, with a voice like a nightingale, was the first who made us acquainted with the songs of Italy.

Madame de la Popliniere expressed kindness for me. She wished to hear *Aristomenes* read ; and she appeared to me the best of all the critics whose advice I had taken. After hearing my play, she analysed it with wonderful clearness and precision, traced the story from scene to scene, remarked what places appeared to her fine and what feeble, and in every correction that she asked, her observations struck me like rays of light. Everyone was surprised at a penetration at once so quick and so correct ; and though I received a good deal of applause myself at this recitation, yet I must say, her success was the more brilliant of the two. Her husband sat fixed in sad astonishment. Amid his admiration for this happy flow of memory and intelligence, for a warmth of eloquence, bordering on inspiration—in short, for this wonderful union of judgment and taste, we could see, through all his efforts to conceal it, an ill-humour and vexation of which the cause was known to himself alone. He wished to withdraw her from that splendid circle into which she had thrown herself ; but this restraint was by her represented as capricious and tyrannical ; hence arose those violent scenes which passed between them when they were without witnesses.

La Popliniere consoled himself in our society, and particularly with me, by satires upon that round of company with which he said he was harassed. He had engaged me to take up my residence with him; he liked my simplicity, my frankness. "We will live together," said he; "and, if you take my advice, you will leave this world, which has seduced you as it formerly seduced me. And, pray, what do you expect from it?" "Patrons," said I, "and some means of fortune." "Patrons! Ah! if you knew the sort of protection to be had from these people! Fortune! And, pray, have I not enough for both? I have no children, and, thank heaven, never shall have. Let us stay quietly together, for I feel every day more need of your company."

Though very unwilling to let me escape, yet, as he courted Madame de Tencin from political motives, he could not refuse her request to hear my tragedy read at her house; it was *Aristomenes*, which had just been acted. The audience inspired respect. There I found assembled Montesquieu, Fontenelle, Mairan, Marivaux, young Helvetius, Astruc and others, all scholars or men of letters. In the centre of these was a woman of profound intelligence and judgment, though enveloped in an outer appearance of good-nature and simplicity, and who seemed rather housekeeper than mistress of the house. This was Madame de Tencin. I had to strain my lungs to the utmost in order to make Fontenelle hear me; and, though set close to his ear, was obliged, likewise, to pronounce every word with a strong and loud voice. But he listened so kindly that I felt pleasure even in this laborious effort. I read, as you may suppose, in a manner extremely monotonous, without any shades and varieties of tone, yet I was honoured with the approbation of the assembly. I had even the honour of dining with Madame de Tencin, and from that day should have been entered on the list of her guests, but M. de la Popliniere found no difficulty in persuading me that there was too much wit going for me; and, indeed, I soon perceived that everyone came prepared to act his part and to exhibit himself as on a stage, and that this desire did not always leave conversation at liberty to follow its easy and natural course. Everyone, as quick as he could, and, as it were, flying, seized the moment for throwing in his word, his anecdote, or his quick and pointed remark; and, out of a desire to find a fit opportunity, they went sometimes rather far in search of it.

In Marivaux, an impatience to prove his sagacity and delicate penetration was easily visible. Montesquieu was more tranquil, and waited till the ball came to him, but still he waited for it. Mairan watched his opportunity. Astruc did not deign to wait.[1] Fontenelle, alone, let it come without seeking, and made so moderate a use of the attention with which the company listened to him, that his delicate remarks and agreeable stories never took up more than a minute. Helvetius, prudent and attentive, gathered to sow hereafter. This last was an example which I could not have had firmness to follow, so that there was little attraction for me in the society.

It was otherwise with that of a woman to whom my good fortune had introduced me, at the house of Madame de Tencin, and who from that time gave me a friendly invitation to visit her. This woman, who was beginning to select and form a literary society, was Madame Geoffrin. I was too late in accepting her invitation; and it was Popliniere again who kept me. "What would you do there?" said he, "it, too, is a rendezvous of wits."

In this way he had made me his prisoner, when my adventure with Marshal Saxe happened. But what attached me most strongly to him was the seeing how unhappy he was himself, and how much he needed my society. He was continually harassed by anonymous letters, which assured him that a happy rival continued, even at Passy, to visit his wife. He watched her himself, and made others watch her, night and day; she knew it, and viewed him only as the jailer of her prison.

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[1] See note (5) at the end.

Then it was that I learned the miseries of a house, into which jealousy on the one side, and hatred on the other, have insinuated themselves like serpents. Here was a voluptuous residence, where arts, talents, and elegant pleasure seemed to have taken up their abode. Yet this abundance of all the means of happiness was poisoned by distrust and fear, by dismal suspicion and gloomy chagrin. I wish you had seen this couple sitting opposite to each other at table; the mournful taciturnity of the husband, the proud and cold indignation of the wife; the care with which their looks shunned each other, and the terrible and gloomy aspect with which they met, especially before their servants; the effort which it cost them to address a few words to each other, and the dry and harsh tone in which they answered. It is difficult to conceive how two beings so strongly alienated could live under the same roof; but she was determined not to leave his house; while, in the eyes of the world and of justice, he had no right to expel her.

Having at length learned the cause of this misunderstanding, I omitted nothing which could soothe the afflictions of him whose heart seemed to lean on mine. A wretch, whom, since he is dead, I disdain to name, accused me as one of Popliniere's flatterers. Now, I declare, in the first place, that I never received from him the slightest present; after which, I may acknowledge without blushing that, from a very sincere and tender attachment, I studied to please him. Equally remote from adulation or neglect, I did not flatter, but I consoled him; I did him the good office which Horace ascribed to the Muses, "vos lene consilium et datis et dato gaudetis almæ." And would to heaven that he had not been more indulgent to my vanity than I was to his! That spirit of property which makes us exaggerate the value of whatever belongs to ourselves, deceived him so much with regard to the young poet whom he had adopted, that whatever came from my pen appeared to him beautiful. Instead, therefore, of a severe friend, whom I should have needed, I found him only a very indulgent admirer. This is one of the causes to which I ascribe that weakness of application which is but too evident in all the works I composed during my residence in his house.

Shortly after, he tired of his dismal country-house, and removed to town; nor was it long till the adventure happened which produced a separation from his wife. Marshal Saxe was one day amusing the public in the Plaine des Sablons with a review of his Hullands. Popliniere, more harassed than ever with anonymous letters, which insisted that his wife received Marshal Richelieu every night in her chamber, seized the time when she was at the review to visit her apartment, and see whether a man could be introduced into it, notwithstanding the vigilance of a faithful porter. He was assisted in his search by Vaucanson[1] and Balot. The latter was a low attorney, acute and penetrating, but a very odd personage, from the hyperbolic language he used on trivial occasions, and from the mixture of meanness and pride in his character; for he was proud and haughty by starts, but habitually servile. He it was who praised M. de la Popliniere for the delicacy of his skin; and who, in a moment of ill-humour, said of him: "*Let him go sleep off the fumes of his gold.*" As to Vaucanson, his understanding was wholly confined to his art; take him out of mechanics, and nothing could be more ignorant or stupid.

On examining the apartment of Madame de la Popliniere, Balot remarked that there was a carpet laid in the closet where her harpsichord stood, yet that in the chimney of this apartment there were neither wood, ashes, nor fire-irons, though the weather was already cold, and everyone had fires. By inference, he thought of striking the back of the chimney with his cane; it sounded hollow. Then Vaucanson approached, and discovered that it was mounted on hinges, and so perfectly joined to the lining on the sides, that the juncture was almost imperceptible. "Ah, sir," exclaimed he, turning to La Popliniere, "what a beautiful work do I see! What excellent workman has done this? The plate is moveable—it opens; but the hinges are so nicely done. What a clever fellow must that be!" "What, sir," said Popliniere, turning pale; "you are sure, then, that this plate opens?" "Sure, sir—I see it!" said Vaucanson, transported with admiration and delight; "nothing can be more wonderful." "And pray what have I to do with your wonders? We came here, indeed, to admire!" "Ah, sir, one meets very seldom with such workmen. I certainly have some that are very good, but none that——" "A truce with your workmen," interrupted Popliniere, "but send me one who can force this plate." "'Tis a thousand pities," said Vaucanson, "to break such a masterpiece."

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[1] See note (6) at the end.

Behind the plate an opening, made in the partition wall, was closed with a panel of wainscot, which in the adjoining house was concealed by a mirror. This opened at will, and gave the clandestine tenant of the neighbouring apartment free access into the music-room. The unhappy Popliniere, who, I believe, sought only legal grounds of freeing himself from his wife, sent for a notary, and had his discovery and his disgrace certified on the spot by a written statement.

His wife was still at the review, when somebody came to tell her of what was doing at home. In order to obtain entrance, either willingly or by force, she begged Marshal Loewendal to accompany her; but the door was shut against her, and the marshal would not take it upon himself to force it. She had recourse to Marshal Saxe. "All I ask," said she, "is, that you procure me access to my own house, and an interview with my husband; by doing so you will save me." The marshal took her into his carriage, and, when they came to the door, he himself alighted and knocked. The faithful porter, half opening the door, was going to tell him that he was forbid——. "Do you not know who I am?" said the marshal. "Learn that no door can be shut against me. Enter, madam, into your own own house." He gave her his hand, and went in along with her.

La Popliniere came furiously to meet them. "My good friend," said the marshal, "why do you make all this uproar? Why do you thus exhibit your quarrels in public? Be assured you will gain nothing but ridicule by all this. Do you not see that your enemies are seeking to embroil you, and are employing, for that purpose, every sort of stratagem? Do not be their dupe. Listen to your wife, who will justify herself completely, and who wishes only to live with you in a proper manner." La Popliniere maintained a respectful silence, and the marshal went away, recommending decency and peace.

Madame de la Popliniere, now left alone with her husband, called forth all her courage and eloquence. She asked what new suspicion, what new slander, had induced him to shut his door against her? And when he talked of the panel, she was indignant that he should believe her privy to this criminal invention. Was it not into his apartment rather than hers that its contrivers had wished to penetrate? And how easily, by only bribing a servant and two workmen, might they complete this passage from one house to the other. But, what! could there be a doubt as to the cause of an artifice so visibly invented to ruin her in his good opinion? "I was too happy with you," said she, "and this happiness has stirred up envy against me. Anonymous letters have not been enough; proofs have been necessary, and its rage has contrived this detestable machine. What do I say? Ever since Envy has thus obstinately persecuted me, have you not seen the crime of which, in her eyes, I had been guilty? Where is there in Paris another woman, whose repose, whose honour, have been so violently attacked? The reason is plain; none are so deserving of envy as I was, and should still be, had you been more just. I contributed to the happiness of a man, whose understanding, whose talents, and honourable rank in society are a torment to the envious. It is you whom they wish to render both ridiculous and miserable. Yes, this is the motive of those anonymous libels which you every day receive; this the hoped-for success of that palpable snare which is now laid for you." Then, throwing herself at his feet: "Ah! sir, restore me your esteem, your confidence, nay, I dare to say it, your tenderness, and my love shall avenge both myself and you for the mischief done to us by our common enemies."

La Popliniere, who, unhappily, was too fully convinced, remained inflexible. "Madam," said he, "all your artful speeches do not alter the resolution I have formed, that we shall no longer live together. If you retire modestly, and without noise, I shall provide for you. But, if I must employ rigorous measures in order to make you leave my house, they shall be employed, and my soul henceforth shall be shut to every sentiment of kindness and indulgence.

She left the house. He allowed her, I believe, an aliment of about eight hundred pounds a year, with which she went to live, or rather to die, in an obscure corner, abandoned by that gay society which once had flattered her so much, but which despised her now that she was reduced to this unfortunate condition.

A glandular swelling in her breast formed the germ of a corrosive tumour, which slowly consumed her.

Marshal Richelieu, while she was wasting away in the most cruel sufferings, sought elsewhere for amusement, but failed not, *en passant*, to pay her a few polite attentions; accordingly, after her death, everyone said: "Marshal Richelieu has really behaved admirably! He continued to visit her till the very last moment."

It was to be loved in this manner that a woman, who, by a virtuous conduct might, in her own house, have enjoyed the public esteem and the pleasures of a happy and respected life, had sacrificed her repose, her virtue, her fortune and every enjoyment. And what gives a still more dismal view of this frenzy of vanity, is that neither her heart nor her senses were much concerned in it. However lively her imagination, Madame Popliniere was extremely cold; but she was ruined, like many others, by thinking that a duke, famed in the annals of gallantry, would be a glorious conquest.

La Popliniere, having now got rid of his wife, thought only of enjoying his freedom and wealth. I then found his house at Passy a most charming, but most dangerous abode. He had in his pay the best concert of music which was then known. The instrumental performers were accommodated in his house, and arranged, with wonderful concert, the symphonies which they were to execute in the evening. The first actors, and particularly the opera girls, embellished his suppers. At these entertainments our ears were first charmed by brilliant voices; after which we were agreeably surprised, amid the sound of instruments, to see Lany, his sister, and the young Puvigné leave the table, and, in the same hall, dance to the airs played by the band. Every able musician who came from Italy, violin players and singers of both sexes, were freely lodged and boarded in his house; and at these concerts everyone studied to excel. Rameau composed his operas; and, on holidays, when mass was said in the private chapel he played upon the organ little pieces which showed wonderful genius. Never did citizen live so like a prince, and, indeed, princes themselves came to share his pleasures.

He had a private theatre, in which nothing was acted but dramas of his own composition, the performers being chosen out of his acquaintances. These dramas, though displaying no very high genius, were in a pretty good taste and tolerably written, so that we could praise them without any excessive degree of flattery. Their success was the more secure, as the representation was followed by a splendid supper, to which were invited a select number of spectators, consisting of ambassadors from the European Courts, the first nobility and the handsomest women in Paris.

La Popliniere did the honours of his table like a man who, by living in the world, had acquired a just sense of propriety, and in whose air and manner there was nothing unbecoming. Even his pride was covered with a veil of politeness and modesty; and in the respect which he paid to the great, he still retained a kind of easy civility which became him well, because it was natural. He was gallant and witty; and, without much study or cultivation, had some talent for versification. Even those who came to enjoy his luxury and expense, failed not elsewhere to ridicule the splendid manner in which he lived; but, in his own house, he heard nothing but praise and congratulation, and everyone, with more or less complaisance, paid in flattery for pleasures enjoyed. He was, indeed, as was commonly said, a spoiled child of Fortune; but though I, who saw him habitually and closely, was sometimes afflicted at seeing him a little too vain, yet I now wonder that he was not more so.

A failing much more deplorable than this pompous vanity was a thirst like that of Tantalus for a kind of licentious pleasure, which he was now almost wholly incapable of enjoying. The financier of La Fontaine complained that *sleep was not sold at market like meat and* *drink.* But it was not sleep only which Popliniere would willingly have paid for at its weight in gold.

He was surrounded by every means of gratification; but while Fortune brought these in crowds, Nature, on the contrary, prescribed a mortifying abstinence; and he was tormented by this continual alternative of temptation and disappointment. The poor wretch could not be convinced that the cause lay in himself. He never failed to accuse the present object; and, whenever a new one appeared more attractive, we saw him gallant and gay, as if expanded by this pleasing ray of hope. Then, indeed, he was agreeable. He told diverting stories; sung songs of his own composing, in a style either free or delicate, according to the object which inspired him. But the more lively and delighted he had been in the evening, the more, next day, was he sad and dissatisfied.

Meanwhile, I, myself, surrounded by temptation, was far from being always able to resist it. I was perfectly sensible that indulgence hurt me, and that I ought to have shunned it by absence; but I had not fortitude sufficient. The corridor in which I lodged was commonly filled with opera girls. With such neighbours it was difficult to reserve a sufficient number of hours either for sleep or study. The pleasures of the table tended also to cloud my intellectual faculties. I had never suspected Temperance to be the nurse of Genius, yet nothing can be more true. I awoke with my head confused and my ideas oppressed by the vapours of a great supper. I was surprised that my spirits should not be so pure or so free as in the Rue des Mathurins or in the Rue des Macons. The reason is plain; the operation of fancy must not be embarrassed by that of the other organs. The Muses are said to be chaste; it should have been added that they are also temperate; but both of these maxims were wholly forgotten by me.

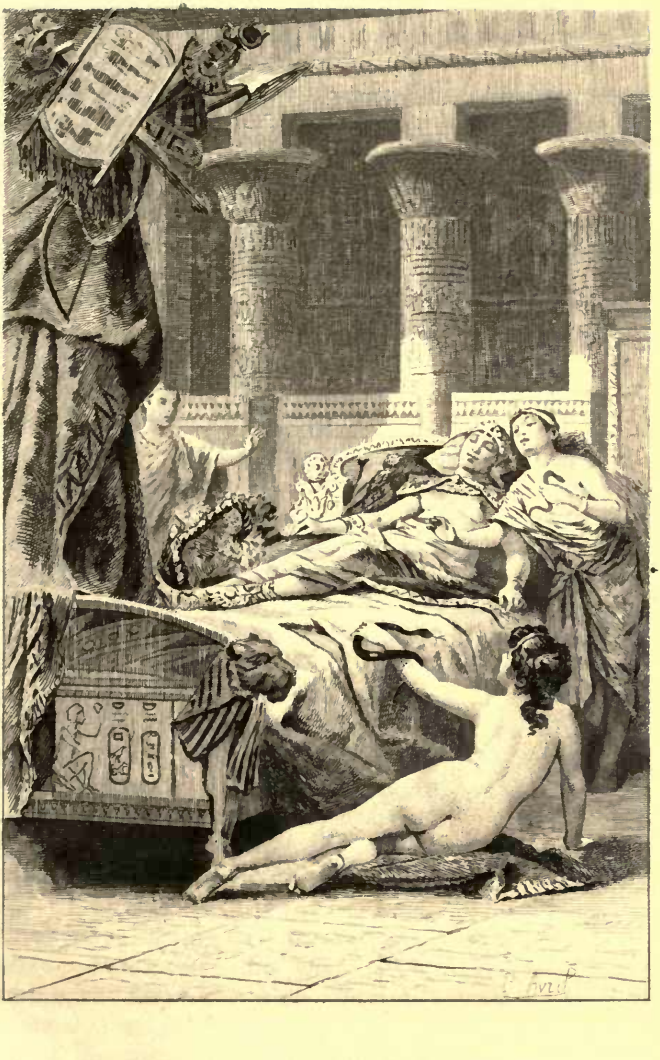
I had carelessly completed the tragedy of *Cleopatra,* the play which, as it now stands in the collection of my works, is finished the most carefully of any. Then, however, as I have elsewhere expressed myself, it bore evident marks of the precipitation with which a man writes at an age when he has not yet experienced how difficult it is to write well. I had introduced upon the stage the catastrophe with which history furnished me, and Vaucanson had been obliging enough to form the automaton of an asp, which, when Cleopatra pressed it to her bosom to call forth its bite, imitated, almost to the life, the motion of a living animal. But the surprise occasioned by this masterpiece of art drew off the attention from the true interest of the scene. I afterwards, therefore, preferred a more simple catastrophe. Indeed, I must acknowledge myself to have been too confident of my own powers in hoping to procure forgiveness for so monstrous an error as that of Antony. The example it affords is terrible; but the great difficulty was to render it affecting.

Seeking for a more pathetic subject, I thought it might be found in the tragedy of the *Heraclides*. This subject bore some resemblance to the *Iphigenia in Aulis;* but the two were so different, both in character and incident, that the same Greek poet, Euripides, had treated both. Yet scarce had my play been accepted, and the rehearsal begun, than the report became current that I had chosen a subject precisely similar to one of Racine, and was preparing to try my strength with that great poet.

This report, spread with the most marked and studied malevolence, showed me that I had enemies, and even that they were numerous. At that time, I inquired in vain for the cause, but I have since discovered it. At the theatre, the charming and treacherous Gaussin had alienated from me all her party, which was numerous, for it was composed, first, of her own friends, and then of the enemies of Mademoiselle Clairon, who were joined by the zealous partisans of Mademoiselle Dumenil. The success of Clairon was always carrying away some character from one or other of these actresses, and I, her faithful poet, was also the object of their enmity. Among the amateurs and intriguers behind the scenes, I was opposed by all Voltaire's enemies, and, besides, by his enthusiastic admirers, who were much less generous than himself, and could not endure my success, however inferior to his. Many circles into which I had been first admitted, and had afterwards neglected, were displeased at my having received their advances so coolly. La Popliniere's friendship drew upon me the hatred of those who envied him. To these, add that crowd of people who are naturally inclined to humble those who rise, and to enjoy the disgrace of those whom they have seen in prosperity, and you will easily conceive how I, who had never either done or wished evil to anyone, should have had so many enemies. Among these were also some young men who had heard my silly adventures talked of in the world, and supposing that, in point of gallantry, I had the same foolish pretensions with themselves, could not forgive this rivalship, which, by the way, proves that the ancient maxim, "Conceal thy life," can nowhere be better applied than to a man of letters, who ought to seek celebrity only by his writings.

But the most terrible of all my enemies was the Procope coffee-house, the haunt of all the critics of the pit. I had at first frequented it, and had been rather a favourite; but, after the success of *Dionysius* and *Aristomenes*, I had been advised to give up going there, and had followed this imprudent advice. Such a sudden and abrupt retreat, being ascribed to vanity, did me the greatest injury; and this tribunal became as hostile to me as it had formerly been favourable. This, my children, may be a warning to you to be cautious in forming your youthful acquaintances, for, when you have once engaged, it is difficult to withdraw without drawing

CLEOPATRA AND ASP



upon yourselves bitter resentments. Instead of gradually untying the knot, I broke it; in which I was very much to blame.

Lastly, the too great frankness and, perhaps, bluntness of my character, never suffered me to conceal my utter aversion for those wretched journalists, who, as Voltaire used to say, daily attack our best compositions, praise our worst, and convert the noble profession of letters into a trade as vile and despicable as themselves. The moment my success began, they fell upon me like a swarm of wasps; from Freron to Aubert, there was not one of those despicable writers who did not take revenge for my contempt by violently abusing my works.

Such was the disposition of a part of the public when I brought out the tragedy of the *Heraclides*. Of all my plays, this was the most feebly written, but the most pathetic; and I cannot describe the impression made by it at the rehearsals. Mademoiselle Dumenil performed the part of Deianira; Mademoiselle Clairon that of Olimpia; and the expression of love and grief in the mother was so heartrending that she who represented the daughter was unable to speak from emotion. The audience dissolved in tears. M. de la Popliniere, as well as all present, assured me of complete success.

I have elsewhere stated the event by which the whole effect of this pathos was destroyed at the first representation. But a circumstance, which could not be mentioned in a preface, may be clearly told in private memoirs. Mademoiselle Dumenil was fond of wine. She used between the acts to drink a tumbler, but so diluted with water as not to intoxicate her. Unhappily, on this day, the servant, without her knowledge, poured out pure wine. While yet warm with acting, she drank this wine, and it went to her head. In a state of stupid intoxication, she acted, or rather stammered the rest of her part, with so roving and senseless an air, that, instead of being pathetic, it became ludicrous; and it is well known that when the pit has once begun to laugh at what is serious, they are no longer affected by anything, and seek only to divert themselves with frigid parody.

As the public did not know what had passed behind the scenes, they failed not to impute to the character the extravagance of the actress; and the report in Paris was, that my play was written in such a silly and ridiculous style of familiarity, that it had thrown them all into bursts of laughter.

Though Mademoiselle Dumenil did not love me, yet, as she considered my disgrace in a great measure owing to her, she thought herself bound to make every exertion in order to repair it. The play was again presented, though much against my will; it was performed as well as possible by the two actresses; the few who saw it shed delicious tears; but the opposite prejudice, once established, could not be removed. It never rose; so that at the sixth representation I desired it to be discontinued.

My children will have read the account I have given elsewhere of the entertainment which awaited me at Passy, on the day of the first representation of the *Heraclides*. Being wholly unsuited to the event, it would have humbled me in the greatest degree, had not my presence of mind enabled me to shun its ridiculous effect, by placing upon the head of Mademoiselle Clairon that crown which was so unseasonably offered to myself. I mention this circumstance only to show the confidence with which Popliniere had looked forward to the success of my work. He still adhered to his opinion, and redoubled his expressions of friendship, in order to recover me from the deep despair with which I was overwhelmed.

My mind, as it gradually rose, assumed a character somewhat more manly, and even a shade of philosophy, for which I was indebted to adversity, and, perhaps, also to some acquaintances I had formed. My enchantment at Passy was not such as to make me forget Paris; and, oftener than Popliniere could have wished, I took little excursions thither. At the house of my worthy friend, Madame Harenc, whom I never neglected, I became acquainted with D'Alembert and the young Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, who both accompanied Madame du Défant whenever she came to supper. Here I merely name these interesting characters, of whom I shall speak at large in the sequel.

Another circle into which I was introduced (I forget how), was that of the Baron de Holbach. There it was that I became acquainted with Diderot, Helvetius, Grimm, and J. J. Rousseau, before he had become a savage. Grimm was then secretary and intimate friend of the young Count de Frise, Marshal Saxe's nephew. He gave us, weekly, a bachelor's dinner, where ease and frankness prevailed; but this was a food of which Rousseau partook very sparingly. No one ever observed more faithfully than he, the gloomy maxim of "living with his friends as if they were one day to be his enemies." When I knew him, he had just gained the prize for eloquence at the Academy at Dijon, by that fine sophism which imputes to the arts and sciences the natural effects of the prosperity and luxury of nations. Yet his character had not assumed the same colour which it afterwards did; nor did he disclose the same ambition of becoming the founder of a sect. Either his pride was not sprung up, or it concealed itself under a timid politeness, which sometimes was even so obsequious as to border on humility. But through his fearful reserve, distrust was visible; his lowering eyes watched everything with a look full of gloomy suspicion. He seldom entered into conversation, and never opened himself to us. Yet the reception he met with was not the less friendly; being known to be governed by a restless and easily wounded self-love, he was treated with the same watchful and delicate attention which a man would use towards a handsome, but very vain and capricious woman, whom he wished to please. He was then employed upon the music of the *Devin du Village*, and sang to us, with his own accompaniment on the harpsichord, the airs he had composed. We were charmed with them, and not less with the firm, animated and profound manner in which the first specimen of his eloquence had been written. Nothing, I may truly say, could be more sincere than our affection for his person and our esteem for his talents. It is the recollection of this time which has made me so indignant at seeing him, for mere trifles, or for wrongs which lay all on his own side, calumniating persons who behaved so well to him, and sought only his friendship. I have lived with them during their whole life. I shall soon have occasion to speak of their minds and their hearts. Never did I see in them anything like the character which he has malignantly imputed to them.

With respect to myself, the short time we were together in this society passed between us coldly, without either affection or aversion. The manner in which we behaved to each other gave no ground either for complaint or praise, and in what I have said, or may say of him, I feel myself perfectly free from every personal feeling.

But there was one advantage which I derived from his intercourse and example; it made me reflect on the imprudence of my youth. "Here," said I, "is a man who has taken time to think before he wrote, while I, in the most difficult and dangerous of all arts, have hastily published almost without thinking at all. Twenty years spent in retired study and meditation have enlarged and ripened his knowledge, while I scatter my ideas when they are scarcely unfolded and have not nearly attained to their full strength and growth. In his first productions, accordingly, we may see an astonishing fulness, a perfect manhood; while mine are marked by the greenness and feebleness of powers not sufficiently nourished by study and reflection." My only excuse lay in the unfortunate necessity of composing incessantly and hastily, in order to procure my subsistence. I resolved to extricate myself from this melancholy situation, even though I should thereby be obliged to renounce literature.

I had some interest at Court; nor had the disgrace of M. Orri deprived me of all hope of making my fortune. The same woman who had caused his dismissal, was pleased with my having more than once echoed the public voice in verses which celebrated whatever was worthy of praise in the reign of her lover. I had composed a little poem upon the establishment of the Military School, a monument raised to the glory of the King by the *Pâris*, bosom friends of Madame de Pompadour, and this poem had interested her and brought me into favour with her. The Abbé de Bernis and Duclos[1] called upon her every Sunday, and as they had both some kindness for me, I made one in their parties. This woman, at whose toilet the first grandees in the kingdom and even the princes of the blood paid their court, was a plain citizen's daughter, who had been so weak as to be desirous of pleasing the King and so unfortunate as to succeed. In this elevated condition she was the best creature in the world. She received us all three in a familiar manner, though with very sensible shades of distinction. To one she said, briskly, and with an air of levity: "How do you do, Duclos?" to the other, in a more friendly tone and manner: "How do you do, Abbé?" while to me, she said, in a lower voice, and more seriously: "How are you, Marmontel?" The ambition of Duclos was to become a person of consequence in his native province of Brittany; that of the

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[1] See note (7) at the end.

Abbé de Bernis was to have a small apartment at the top of the Tuileries, with a pension of fifty pounds on the privy purse; while mine was to be employed usefully to myself and to the public, without depending on its caprice. I asked only for constant and peaceful employment. "I am sensible," said I to Madame de Pompadour, "that my poetical talents are but moderate; but I think myself possessed of sufficient capacity to fill a place in a public office, and I am capable of any degree of application which it may require. Just get me put upon trial, madam; I dare assure you that I shall give satisfaction." She answered that I was designed by Nature to be a man of letters; that my disgust at poetry was only want of courage; that, instead of throwing up the game, I should endeavour, as Voltaire had often done, to regain what I had lost, and to rise from my fall, like him, by a new success.

Out of complaisance to her, I agreed to employ myself on a new subject. But the one I chose was too simple, and too much above my powers. All the subjects which history afforded appeared to me exhausted; all the great interests of the human heart, the violent passions, the tragic situations—in a word, all the great springs of terror and pity seemed to have been previously occupied by the great masters. I rummaged my head for a story which might be new, and out of the common road. I thought I had found it in a subject wholly imaginary, with which I was at first delighted—*The Funeral of Sesostris.* It presented an exhibition of awful majesty; it gave me great characters to paint in a variety of situations, and an intrigue so extremely complicated that the issue could not possibly be foreseen. This was what blinded me to the difficulties of a story which was wholly moral and political, and which could not be supported with warmth during five acts without all the resources of poetical eloquence. I exerted myself to the utmost; and my friends, either through mistake or excessive indulgence, persuaded me that I had succeeded. Madame de Pompadour often inquired how I came on with my new play; when it was finished she wished to read it, and made some pretty just objections to particular passages; but, on the whole, she was pleased with it.

Here I recollect a circumstance which may enliven a little the story of my misfortune. While the manuscript of my play was still in the hands of Madame de Pompadour, I appeared one Sunday at her toilet, in that hall which was crowded with courtiers, newly come from the King's levee. She was encircled by them; and whether there were any whom she disliked to see, or whether she was tired of having so many people about her, she said, immediately on seeing me: "I have something to say to you;" then, leaving her toilet, she went into her closet, whither I followed. It was merely to return my manuscript, with her notes pencilled on it. She was five or six minutes pointing out the places marked, and explaining her criticisms. Meanwhile the whole circle of courtiers stood round the toilet waiting for her. She again entered the room, while I, concealing the manuscript, went modestly to resume my place. I strongly suspected that so singular an incident would produce its effect; but the universal impression which it made went far beyond my idea. Every eye was fixed on me; slight, little salutations, sweet smiles of friendship were addressed to me from all sides; and, before leaving the hall, I was invited to dinner for at least the whole week. What do I say? A nobleman, a man with a ribbon at his breast, whom I had sometimes dined with at M. de la Popliniere's (the M. D. S. happening to stand by my side), took hold of my hand and whispered: "Won't you speak to your old friends?" Amazed at his meanness, I bowed, and said to myself: "Ah! what a thing, then, is favour, since its very shadow confers such singular importance."

On reading my play to the actors, they, like Madame de Pompadour, were charmed by the moral beauty with which I had adorned the concluding acts. But on the stage their weakness was evident, and was felt in proportion to the vehemence and warmth of those which preceded. There was nothing tragic in mere contests of generosity and virtue. The public grew weary of the absence of violent emotion, and my play sank. Here I was sensible that the public were in the right.

I returned home, determined never more to write for the stage; and I immediately wrote by express to Madame de Pompadour, who was at Bellevue, telling her of my disaster, and earnestly repeating my entreaty, that she would get me employed more usefully than in an art for which Nature had never intended me.

She was at table with the King when she received my letter; and having obtained permission to read it, "Sire," said she, "the new play has failed; and do you know who it is that tells me so? The author himself. Poor young man! I wish I could relieve him just now by the offer of some employment." Her brother, the Marquis de Marigny, who was at supper, said that, if she chose, he could give me a place of secretary for buildings. "Ah!" said she, "I beseech you, write to him to-morrow;" and the King appeared satisfied that I should receive this consolation.

In this letter, M. de Marigny, in the most agreeable and obliging manner, offered me a place, which, he said, was not very lucrative, but tranquil, and such as would leave me leisure to devote to the Muses. My answer was expressive of the emotion of joy and gratitude with which I was animated. I felt like one who had reached a harbour after shipwreck, and I embraced the hospitable land which secured me a pleasing repose.

M. de la Popliniere learnt, not without some chagrin, that I was about to separate from him. He complained and repeated what he had often said, that I need not be anxious about the future for that he intended to provide for me. I answered that when I renounced the profession of a man of letters, my intention had not been to live idle and useless, but that I did not feel the less gratitude for his kindness. Indeed, I should be ungrateful, after mentioning the part which he undesignedly took in the mischief I did myself, were I not to add that the time we spent together is, in many other respects, dear to my recollection, both from the sentiments of esteem and confidence which he himself expressed for me and from the goodwill with which he inspired all those who would listen to him while discoursing on the goodness of my heart, for it was this that he particularly extolled in me.

At his house, men of very different characters and capacity followed like a moving picture. I frequently met the ambassadors from the different Courts of Europe and derived a great deal of information from them. There it was that I became acquainted with the Count de Kaunitz, then ambassador from the Court of Vienna, and since the most celebrated statesman in Europe. He had conceived a friendship for me; I went very often to dine with him at the Bourbon palace, and he talked of Paris and Versailles like a man who observed them well. Yet I must confess that the circumstance in his character which struck me most was a vain and effeminate delicacy. I believed him more occupied with his health, his appearance, and particularly with his complexion and the dressing of his hair, than with the interests of his court. I one day surprised him on his return from a hunting-party, with the yolk of an egg spread over his face, to prevent its being sunburnt; and I learnt long after, from his cousin, the Count de Par, a plain, unaffected man, that during the whole period of that long and glorious administration, during which he formed the soul of the Cabinet of Vienna, he retained the same character of luxury, of effeminacy and of minute attention to his dress and person which he had when I knew him. Of all the men whom I have seen in the world, he is the one with respect to whom I have been most grossly mistaken. Yet I remember some of his conversations, which might have given me a different view of his turn of mind.

He one day said to me: "How am I talked of in the fashionable circles?" "Why, sir, people say that your Excellency does not come up to the splendid idea they had formed on your arrival at Paris. Your mission from the first Court in Europe, your large fortune, the palace you inhabit and the dazzling pomp with which you entered, promised greater luxury and splendour in your household and manner of living. They expected a sumptuous table, frequent entertainments, balls—particularly balls, sir—in your magnificent drawing-rooms. But of all this they see nothing; you live like a private man, with the wives of financiers, and neglect the people of highest fashion, both at Court and city." "My dear Marmontel," said he, "I have just two things to attend to here: first, the affairs of my sovereign, which I do well; and then my pleasures, with regard to which I have only myself to consult. Acting a part would be a tiresome constraint and, therefore, I avoid it. There is not an intriguing woman at Versailles who is worth the trouble of gaining. What should I do with these women? Sit down to their *tri*, or their dismal *cavagnole?* I have only two persons to court—the King and his mistress—and I am on a good footing with both." This was not the discourse of a superficial and frivolous man.

After all, his little dinners were very good. Merci, Staremberg and Seckendorf, who were all three his official attendants, or, rather, his pupils, treated me in a very friendly manner, and a flask of tokay enlivened the close of the repast.

A character very different from the Count de Kaunitz, both more affectionate and more amiable, was Lord Albemarle, the English ambassador, whose death was as much lamented in Paris as in his own country. He was the perfection of what one would call a gentleman and a man of honour; noble, feeling and generous; and, at the same time, loyal, frank, polite and friendly; he united whatever is best and most valuable, both in the French and English character. He had a mistress, an accomplished girl, whom envy never reproached with any other fault than that of having yielded to him. I made her my friend, which was a sure method of becoming also the friend of Lord Albemarle. The name of this amiable person was Mademoiselle Gaucher, but he gave her the childish and tender appellation of Lolote. She it was to whom her lover said one evening, as she was earnestly viewing a star, "Do not look so much at it, my dear, I cannot give it you." Never did love express itself with more delicacy. His lordship's passion honoured its object with the highest esteem, the tenderest respect; nor was he the only person who viewed her with these sentiments. She was always faithful to the only man who had been able to please her; in her, therefore, the most excusable of errors into which innocence is drawn by extreme youth, had assumed a dignified and respectable character which vice never had before. Her love possessed fidelity, delicacy and disinterestedness—in short, it would have been completely virtuous had it only been lawful. These two lovers would have been the most perfect model of a married couple.

The character of Mademoiselle Gaucher was unaffectedly expressed in her whole person. Her beauty had something romantic, which, till then, one had seen only in idea. Her figure united the majesty of the cedar with the pliancy of the poplar; she walked with a languid and indolent air, but her carriage, though careless, was full of unaffected grace and propriety. Her image was present to my thoughts while I drew the shepherdess of the Alps. A lively imagination, with a cool judgment, gave her mind very much the same character as that of

Montaigne. He was her favourite author, whom she habitually read; her language was imbued with his native and easy flow and often with his energetic and happy turn of expression.

I was as much charmed with her as it is possible to be with a woman without being in love with her. Next to the conversation of Voltaire, hers was the most delightful to me. We became intimate friends from the time that we knew each other.

She lost Lord Albemarle; he had, I believe, secured her an annuity of two hundred and fifty pounds a year, in which her whole fortune consisted. The grief she felt was profound, yet she behaved with firmness; and, by sharing her distress, I assisted her to bear it with decency. All Lord Albemarle's friends were hers; and they all continued faithful to her. Her society consisted of the Duke de Biron, the Marquis de Castries and some others of the same class. Too happy, had she not, by a kind of fatality, been thrown out of so agreeable a situation, with which she herself was satisfied, into a rank of life different from her own.

Her health had been impaired; her friends grew anxious and advised her to try the waters of Barege. In going and coming she passed through Montauban, where she was treated with particular attention by the Count de Herouville, governor of that fortress. When she arrived at Paris she received from him a letter nearly in these words: " I and all my domestics are poisoned. Come, madam, do come to my aid and bring a physician, for I place confidence in you alone." She set out in a post-chaise with an able physician, and M. de Herouville was saved. She had already inspired him with that enthusiasm which, in lively old men, bears much resemblance to love. This was greatly increased by the service she had done him and the appearance she had made at the head of his family. She had restored order and tranquility to his house, health to himself and his servants, whose bowels had been torn by verdigris, and, acting in concert with Dr. Malouet, had, on her side, performed the office of a moral physician. He was transported with admiration at the view of such zeal and courage; and, as soon as he was out of danger, could express his gratitude only by saying to her, as Medoro to Angelica:

"Vous servir est ma seule envie,
J'en fais mon espoir le plus doux;
Vous m'avez conservé la vie,
Je ne la cheris que pour vous."[1]

She was wise enough at first to resist his entreaties; but she was so weak at last as to consent, on condition, however, that their marriage should be secret, which it was for some time; but she became a mother and it was necessary to acknowledge it.

The only wise conduct for both—and it was the advice I gave to my fair friend—would then have been to confine themselves to a society of men of their own choice; to render it agreeable to women and, if possible attract them into it, but if not, to do without their society and not seem to think of it. Madame de Herouville was perfectly sensible that this was the only proper line of conduct for her. But her husband, eager to introduce her into the world, attempted to do violence to public opinion. Wretched imprudence! He ought to have known that to this opinion the most important interests of married women were attached. Already too indignant at seeing girls carry off their husbands and lovers, they were fully determined never to allow them to usurp also their rank and to enjoy it amid themselves. He hoped that his wife's excellent character, her singular merit, that decency and propriety which she had preserved even in her misconduct, might have cast a veil over it. He was cruelly undeceived in his foolish error. She suffered mortifications and died of grief.

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[1] "To serve you is my sole desire, I look to it as my sweetest hope; you have preserved my life; on your account alone I value it."

In the house of M. de la Popliniere I became also acquainted with the family of Chalut, whom I shall have occasion more than once to mention with praise in these Memoirs and whom I have seen die away gradually before my eyes.

Lastly, the country-house of Madame de Tencin[1] being in the neighbourhood of that where I lived, gave me the advantage of some private interviews with that extraordinary woman. I had declined the honour of being admitted to her literary dinners; but when she came to this place for the sake of retirement, I used to spend with her the time when she was alone, and I cannot express how much I was deceived by her easy and careless air. Madame de Tencin, the woman who, of all others in the kingdom, moved the greatest number of political springs, both in Court and city, appeared to me only an indolent old woman. "You do not like," said she, "these meetings of wits; you are timid in their presence. Well, come and chat with me in my solitude; you will be more at ease; and your character will suit better with my dull common sense." She made me tell my history from childhood, entered into all my interests, shared all my troubles, and seemed to be occupied with nothing but my concerns. Ah! what acuteness, versatility and activity of mind were concealed from me under this negligent air this appearance of leisure and tranquility. I laugh still at the simplicity with which, at leaving her, I used to exclaim, "honest woman!" Yet her conversation, without my perceiving it, gave me a sounder and deeper knowledge of the world. For instance, I recollect two pieces of advice she gave me; one was to secure a livelihood independent of literary success, and to throw only the surplus of my time into this lottery. "Woe to him," said she, "who depends wholly on his pen! Nothing can be more precarious. The man who makes a pair of shoes is certain of being paid; but he who writes a book or a tragedy is certain of nothing." Another advice was, to attach myself rather to female than to male friends. "For by means of women," said she, "you may do anything you please with men; and besides, of the latter, some are too dissipated and others too much taken up with their private interests to pay any attention to yours; whereas, women think of these things were it only from having nothing else to do. Talk this evening to your female friend of some affair which concerns you; next day, as she works at her wheel or her tapestry, she will busy her brain in contriving some means of serving you. But when you think a woman can be useful to you, beware of being anything more than her friend; for, if you be her lover, then as soon as a coolness, a quarrel ensues, all is over. Behave to her, then, with attention, with complaisance—nay, if you will, with gallantry, but proceed no farther, you understand me." Thus, in all our conversations, the ease of her manner so completely deceived me that I never took her talents for anything more than plain good sense.

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[1] See note (8) at the end.

I formed an acquaintance of the same date, but of a different kind, with Cury and his companions, the intendants of the *Menus Plaisirs*. You will see afterwards how dear it cost me, but at present I shall only mention how it came about. Quinault was one of my most favourite poets. I felt the harmony of his beautiful lines; I was charmed with the elegant facility of his style, and never read the fine scenes of *Proserpine*, of *Theseus* and of *Armida* without being seized with a desire of composing an opera and even with some hope of writing like him. This was only a vain and youthful presumption; yet was it honourable to the poet who inspired it; for one of the characters of a truly fine style, as Horace observes, is to be apparently easy to imitate, but in fact inimitable:

> "Ut sibi quivis
> Speret idem, sudet multum, frustra que laboret
> Ausus idem."[1]

Besides, I lived in the house with Rameau; I saw him employed upon wretched poems and could have wished to have given him better.

Such was my disposition when, at the birth of the Duke of Burgundy, Bernage, Provost of the Merchants, came and proposed that I should unite my labours with those of Rameau in composing, on occasion of this happy event, an opera which might admit of very splendid scenery. It was necessary that both the words and the music of this work should be hastily completed by a fixed day.

You may well suppose that neither of us were slow in beginning our task. Nevertheless, as *Acanthe et Cephise* contained a great deal of show and machinery, it was supported by the beauty of the decorations, by some fine effects of harmony and, perhaps, also by some interesting situations. It ran, I believe, through fourteen nights, which was a great deal for a work done at command.

I executed somewhat better two detached acts, which Rameau chose also to put into music—*La Guirlande* and *Les Sybarites*. They both met with success. In our concerts, however, I heard other pieces, in comparison with the melody of which the French music appeared to me heavy and monotonous. My ear and soul were charmed and transported by the airs, duos and measured recitative of which the Italians formed their lyric scene. I studied their forms; I endeavoured to accommodate our language to them, and could have wished Rameau to join with me in transporting their beauties upon our theatre. But Rameau, now an old man, was unwilling to change his manner; he would see nothing but faults and abuse in that of the Italians, and pretended to despise it. The finest air of Leo, of Vinci, of Pergolese or of Jommelli, made him run away with anger. It was not till long after that I found composers capable of understanding and seconding me. From that time, however, I was known among the amateurs of the opera, at the head of whom, both in singing, in dancing and also in voluptuousness, the intendants of the *Menus Plaisirs*[1] were distinguished behind the scenes. I was drawn into their society by that pleasing and natural inclination which disposes us to enjoy life; and their intercourse was the more attractive as it presented, in the very bosom of pleasure, characters of amusing originality and sallies of wit in the very best taste and manner. Cary, chief of the joyous band, was a man of wit and extremely diverting; he excelled in a grave irony, but was more facetious than ill-natured. The Epicurean Tribon had first been a disciple and one of the most favourite pupils of Father Porée, and afterwards became a performer at the opera. Having yielded the scene to Geliote, he was now living free and content with little, and his old age was rendered delightful by an anacreontic humour which never forsook him. I never saw anyone so gaily take leave of the pleasures of youth, let himself be smoothly carried along by the current of years, and even in their decline preserve that green, gay and open-hearted philosophy which Montaigne himself would allow only to youth. A character of another stamp, and equally amiable in his way, was Geliote—sweet, smiling, *amistoux*, to use a word of his own province, which paints him in native colours; the serenity of happiness sat on his forehead, and he breathed it into others. Indeed, were I asked to name the most completely happy man whom I ever saw, I should answer, "Geliote." His birth was obscure, and in his youth he had been a singing-boy in a church at Toulouse, but he suddenly appeared upon the opera and met with the most brilliant success; he had been from that time, and still was, the idol of the public. When he appeared on the stage, the audience leaped for joy; they listened in an ecstacy of pleasure; at the end of every song they broke out into applause. His voice was the most extraordinary ever heard, at once for capacity and fulness of sound and for the piercing brilliancy of its silvery tones. Neither his face nor his figure was handsome, but his singing was sufficient to embellish him; the eyes, as well as the ears, seemed then to be charmed. The young women had their heads turned with him; they were seen thrusting themselves half out of their boxes, and their excessive emotion became itself a spectacle—nay, more than one of the handsomest were pleased to express it to him. He was so good a musician that his art gave him no trouble, and he experienced none of the unpleasant circumstances usually attached to his profession. He was loved and respected by his companions, with whom he was on a polite and friendly, but not familiar, footing, and he lived like a man of the world whose company was universally sought after. People at first wished only to hear him sing, and were as much delighted with his readiness in gratifying them as with the fineness of his voice. He had studiously selected and made himself master of our prettiest songs, and sung them to his guitar with exquisite taste. But men soon forgot the singer and only enjoyed the agreeable man; his wit and character gained him as many friends as he had admirers. These were equally among the class of citizens as well as in the most fashionable circles; being everywhere mild, plain and modest, he was never out of place. By the practice of his art and by favours which were bestowed on him, he had acquired a handsome little fortune, his first use of which was to make his family comfortable. He possessed very considerable interest in the offices and cabinets of ministers, for it was the interest which pleasure bestows, and he employed it in rendering essential services to his native province. There, accordingly, he was adored. He was allowed to pay it a visit every summer, and his route from Paris to Pau being known, the time of his passing through every city was fixed; entertainments everywhere awaited him; and here I must mention some particulars which I learned before leaving Toulouse. He had two friends in that city to whom none were ever preferred; one was the tailor with whom he had lodged, and the other his music-master when he was a singing-boy. The nobility and members of parliament disputed who should have Geliote at his second supper; but as to the first, it was well known to be invariably reserved for these two friends. He was a favourite of the fair, as much and more than he could have wished; yet he was celebrated for discretion, and none of his numerous conquests were known, with the exception of such as chose to declare themselves. Lastly, amid so much prosperity, envy was never roused against him; nor did I ever hear that Geliote had an enemy.

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[1] "So that anyone may hope to do the same, may toil much, and labour in vain, after he has attempted it."

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[1] Persons under whose direction public shows and other amusements of the Court were carried on. Their office somewhat resembled that anciently held in England by the *Master of the Revels*.

The rest of this society of the *Menus Plaisirs* were merely lovers of mirth; and among these I may be said to have held a pretty distinguished corner.

Now, after the joyous dinners I had had with these gentlemen, just imagine you see me passing over to the philosophic school, and at the opera buffa, newly arrived from Italy, mixing with the Diderots, the d'Alemberts, the Buffons, the Turgots, the d'Holbachs, the Helvetiuses, the Rousseaus, all burning with zeal for Italian music and eager to raise the immense edifice of the "Encyclopædia," whose foundations they were laying. You will then say of me in miniature what Horace said of Aristippus, "Omnis Aristippum decuit color, et status et res.[1]" Yes, I own it—pleasure, study, the table, philosophy, were all welcome. I relished wisdom with the wise; but with fools, I willingly gave myself up to folly. My character was yet fluctuating, various and discordant. I adored virtue, yet I yielded to the example and allurement of vice. I was satisfied, I was happy, taking a frugal dinner with d'Alembert in his little room at the honest glazier's. Then, after having been busied all the morning with his high geometry, he would converse to me with taste and understanding on subjects of literature; or, on moral subjects, would unite the wisdom of a mature understanding with the gaiety of a free and youthful heart, traverse the world with the eye of a Democritus and raise a laugh at the expense of pride and folly. I was happy, also, though in a lighter and more fugitive manner, when, amid a flight of gay and sportive creatures, escaped from behind the scenes, I sat at table among our amateurs, surrounded by the Nymphs and Graces, and sometimes, too, by the votaries of Bacchus, and heard nothing but the praises of love and wine. I left all to go to Versailles. But, before separating from those who had taken the lead in the enterprise of the "Encyclopædia," I engaged to contribute to the literary department, and the praises they gave my performances encouraged me to do more than either I or they hoped or expected.

Voltaire was then absent from Paris; he was in Prussia. The thread of my story has for some time prevented my mentioning him, but, till his departure, our intimacy continued the same, and the afflictions he underwent seemed only to draw closer the ties of our union. Of the afflictions, the keenest for the time was that occasioned by the death of the Marchioness Duchâtelet. However, to conceal nothing, I observed on this occasion, as on many others, the changeable nature of his feelings. When I went to condole with him on his affliction, "Come," said he, "my friend, come and share my grief. I have lost my illustrious friend; I am in despair; nothing can comfort me." Now, often had I heard him compare her to a fury that haunted his steps, and I knew that more than once, in their quarrels, they had drawn knives against each other; however, I let him weep on and seemed to sympathise with him. Only, with the view of deriving from the very cause of this death some ground of consolation, I asked what she died of. "What!" said he, "do you not know? Ah! my friend, she has been killed by that brute; she had a child by him." It was Saint-Lambert, his rival, of whom he was speaking. And then he goes on with his panegyric on this incomparable woman and redoubles his tears and his sobs. Presently arrives Chauvelin, the intendant, who tells him some story or other, that was diverting enough, upon which Voltaire falls into bursts of laughter. I laughed too, as I went away, at this great man, who, in every passion which agitated him, passed rapidly, like a child, from one extreme to another. One alone was fixed, and, as it were, inherent in his soul; this was ambition and the love of glory; and nothing which could nourish or flatter this passion was viewed by him with indifference.

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[1] "Every complexion of life, position, and fortune became Aristippus."

He did not think it enough to be the most illustrious among men of letters, he wished also to be distinguished at Court. From his earliest youth he had been flattered by an habitual intercourse with the great. He had associated, first with Marshal Villars and the Grand Prior de Vendome; then with the Duke de Richelieu, the Duke de la Valliere, the Boufflers, the Montmorency.

He supped constantly with them and wrote and talked to them with his well-known respectful familiarity. Verses which contained a light and delicate flattery, with the charms of a conversation no less seducing than his poetry, made him beliked and feasted among these noblemen. Now they were admitted to Royal suppers; and why then should not he? This was one of his most eager desires. He recollected the reception which Louis le Grand had given to Boileau and Racine. "Horace and Virgil," said he, "had the honour of approaching the person of Augustus; the *Æneid* had been read in the cabinet of Livia Were Addison and Prior greater men than he? Yet in their country they had been honourably employed, one as minister and the other as ambassador." The place of historiographer was already a mark of confidence which he had received; and when had it ever been so splendidly filled? He had purchased the office of gentleman-in-ordinary to the King's bed-chamber. To this office very little duty was commonly attached; yet it gave him a right to be sent to foreign Courts upon slight commissions; and he hoped that, in the case of a man like him, these commissions would not be confined to barren compliments of congratulation and condolence. He was ambitious, in short, to make his way at Court; and when he had once taken any scheme into his head, he stuck to it obstinately. He used to quote these words of Scripture: "Regnum cœlorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud."[1] He employed, therefore, every imaginable method of bringing himself under the King's notice.

When Madame d'Etioles, afterwards Marchioness of Pompadour, was publicly announced as the Royal mistress, and even before that period, he made haste to pay court to her. He easily succeeded in pleasing her; and while he celebrated the victories of the King, he at the same time flattered his mistress by writing pretty verses for her. He doubted not that, through her means, he should obtain the favour of being admitted to the little Cabinet suppers; and I am convinced that such would have been her wish.

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[1] "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

This lady, finding herself suddenly transplanted to Court, and knowing as yet very imperfectly the character and inclinations of the King, had at first hoped to amuse him by her talents. She had a private theatre and performed in his presence little operas, some of which were composed expressly for her; and in these, her action, her voice and her singing were justly applauded. Voltaire, having got into favour with her, thought of undertaking the direction of this exhibition. The gentlemen of the bedchamber and the intendants of the *Menus Plaisirs* took the alarm at this encroachment upon their rights. A league was formed between them to remove a man who would have supplanted them all had he made himself as agreeable to the King as to his mistress. But he was well known to be no favourite of that monarch, whose prejudice against him was increased by the eagerness with which he pushed himself forward. Little affected by the praises bestowed in his panegyric, he viewed him only as an impious philosopher and an ambitious flatterer. With great difficulty he had at length consented to his being received into the French Academy. Without reckoning the friends of religion, who were no friends to Voltaire, the King was surrounded by men who were jealous of the favour which they saw him courting, and studiously censured everything he did with the view of pleasing. According to them, the poem of "Fontenoy" was only a frigid gazette; the panegyric on the King was inanimate, devoid of colouring and eloquence. The lines to Madame de Pompadour were censured as indecent and indiscreet; and with regard to the following, in particular—

"Soyez tous deux sans ennemis,
Et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes,"[1]

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[1] "Be both without enemies, and both retain your conquests."

they made the King remark how disrespectful it was to place him on a level with his mistress.

At the marriage of the Dauphin with the Infanta of Spain, it was easy to expose the ridiculous impropriety of endeavouring to entertain the Infanta with the *Princess of Navarre*, a drama which really was not calculated to succeed. The same cannot be said of the opera called the *Temple of Glory;* the idea was great, the subject well conceived and suitably executed. The third act, where Trajan was the hero, contained an illusion with which the King was likely to be flattered; this hero, to whom the temple of glory was opened, was just, generous and humane; a friend to peace and worthy of the love of the world. Voltaire never doubted that the King would, in this panegyric, recognise himself. After the play he met him, and seeing His Majesty pass without speaking, he took the liberty of asking, "Is Trajan satisfied?" Trajan, surprised and displeased that anyone should have the boldness to interrogate him, answered by a cold silence; and the whole Court thought Voltaire wrong in having dared to question the King.

The only thing now necessary for his removal was to alienate the mistress, and the scheme they fell upon for this purpose was to set up Crebillon in opposition to him.

Crebillon, old and poor, was living with his dogs in the lowest part of the Marais, labouring, at broken intervals, upon that *Catilina* which he had announced ten years before, and of which he now and then read fragments of scenes, which were thought admirable. Age, former success, manners somewhat savage, a soldier-like character, an aspect truly tragic, the commanding, though simple tone in which he recited his rough and harsh lines, together with the energetic vigour of his expressions—all concurred in striking men's minds with a kind of enthusiasm. I have heard persons, who were no fools, applaud with transport the following lines, which he had put in the mouth of Cicero:

> "Catilina, je crois que tu n'es point coupable;
> Mais si tu l'es, tu n'es qu'un homme detestable;
> Et je ne vois en toi, que l'esprit et l'eclat
> Du plus grand des mortels, et du plus scelerat."[1]

The name of Crebillon was the point round which the enemies of Voltaire rallied. *Electre* and *Rhadamiste*, which were still occasionally performed, drew but small audiences; all Crebillon's other tragedies were forgotten, while Voltaire's *Œdipe*, *Alzire*, *Mahomet*, *Zaire*, *Merope*, appeared on the stage in all the splendour of full success. Old Crebillon's party was small, but they were loud and never ceased to call him the Sophocles of the age; nay, even some men of letters, Marivaux, in particular, used to say that all the fine talents of Voltaire must bow before the genius of Crebillon.

Madame de Pompadour was told of this great man being abandoned and allowed to grow old without succour, because he had no turn for intrigue. This was touching her in the tenderest part. "What do you say?" cried she, "Crebillon poor and abandoned!" She immediately obtained for him from the King a pension of a hundred louis on the privy purse.

Crebillon hastened to thank his benefactress. She was confined to bed with a slight indisposition when he was announced; she desired him to be admitted. Affected by the sight of this fine old man she gave him a very gracious reception. He was affected by it, and was leaning on the bed to kiss her hand, when the King came in. "Ah, madam," cried Crebillon, "the King has surprised us; I am undone." The King was pleased with this sally from an old man of eighty. Crebillon's success was decided. All the *Menus Plaisirs* exhausted themselves in praises of his genius and character. He had dignity, they said, but no pride, and still less vainglory. His poverty was a clear proof of his disinterestedness. He was quite a character of the old stamp, and a man whose genius did honour to the present reign. *Catilina* was talked of as the wonder of the age. Madame de Pompadour wished to hear it and a day was appointed for the reading; the King was listening, present though invisible. It was completely successful; and when *Catilina* was first represented, Madame de Pompadour, with a flight of courtiers, attended and showed the liveliest interest in its success. Shortly after, Crebillon obtained the favour of having an edition of his works printed at the Louvre, at the expense of the Treasury. From that time Voltaire was coldly received and gave up going to Court.

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[1] "Catiline, I believe you not to be guilty; but if you are, you are only a detestable man, and I see you distinguished as being either the greatest or the most criminal of human beings."

You know the correspondence he had carried on with the Prince Royal of Prussia. That Prince, on becoming King, expressed the same affection for him; and the infinitely flattering manner in which Voltaire answered, had, perhaps, secretly tended to alienate him from the mind of Louis XV. The King of Prussia, therefore, from the time he came to the throne had never ceased inviting Voltaire by letter to come and pay him a visit; and the favour which Crebillon enjoyed at Court having stung him to the quick, he determined to go. But before setting out he endeavoured to take revenge for this vexation in a manner truly worthy of a great man. He attacked his adversary in close combat, and tried his strength with him on the different subjects he had treated, without shunning any except *Rhadamiste*, *Atrée* and *Pyrrhus;* the one, doubtless, out of respect, the other out of horror and the third out of disdain for such a disagreeable and fantastical subject.

He began with *Semiramis*, and the grand and tragical manner in which the plot was conceived, the gloomy, tempestuous and terrible colouring which he threw over it, the magic of his numbers, the religious and formidable majesty which filled it, the melting situations and scenes which he introduced, and, lastly, the art with which the marvellous part was prepared and supported, were well fitted to annihilate the feeble and frigid *Semiramis* of Crebillon. But the theatre was not then suited for a plot of this description. The stage was confined by a crowd of spectators; some seated on benches raised one above another, others standing at the bottom of the theatre and even behind, so that the distracted Semiramis, with the shade of Ninus issuing from his tomb, was obliged to pass through a thick row of *petits maîtres*. This awkward circumstance threw ridicule upon the seriousness of the theatrical action. Without illusion there can be no interest, and without probability no illusion; so that this play which, in point of genius, is Voltaire's masterpiece, experienced at its first representation a want of success which almost amounted to failure. Voltaire shuddered with grief; but he was not discouraged. Following in the steps of Sophocles, he composed *Arestes*, where he rose above Sophocles himself in the character of Electra and in the art of softening the indecency and harshness of that of Clytemnestra. But, at the moment of the catastrophe in the fifth act, he had not yet sufficiently weakened the horror of the parricide, and the friends of Crebillon being no way disposed to befriend him, everything which criticism could lay hold of was either murmured at or turned into derision. Thus the performance was every instant interrupted, so that this play, which has since been so justly applauded, was then hissed. I was in the amphitheatre, more dead than alive. Voltaire came, and, at an instant when the pit were turning a pathetic stroke into ridicule, he got up and exclaimed: "Oh! you barbarians! they are the words of Sophocles."

Lastly, he gave *Rome Sauvée*, where, in the characters of Cicero, of Cæsar and of Cato, he vindicated the dignity of the Roman Senate, which Crebillon had degraded by rendering all those great characters subordinate to that of Catiline. I remember, when he had just written the fine scenes which describe the interviews of Cicero and Cæsar with Catiline, he read them to me in a style of perfection to which no actor will ever approach, with a noble simplicity free from all peculiarity of manner—better, in short, than I had ever heard from himself. "Indeed," said I, "your conscience is at rest upon these lines; you lay no false ornament upon them, and you are right; never did you compose finer." This play acquired in a high degree the esteem of all good judges; but it was not written for the multitude. The beauty of the poetry and the learning displayed in the adherence to the manners and character of the time were merits little felt by the great mass of the public. Thus Voltaire, notwithstanding a prodigious advantage over his rival, had the affliction of seeing his triumph disputed and even refused.

The disgust occasioned by these occurrences made him determine upon going to Prussia. Only one difficulty remained, which was removed by an incident so curious that it may amuse you for a moment.

The difficulty lay in the travelling expenses, about which Frederick required a little solicitation. He was perfectly willing to pay Voltaire's expenses, and agreed to give him a thousand louis for that purpose. But Madame Denis wishing to accompany her uncle, Voltaire asked a thousand more for her. To this the King of Prussia would on no account listen. "I shall be very glad," said he, "that Madame Denis accompany you; but I do not ask it." "See, now," said Voltaire to me, "this niggardly behaviour in a King. He has tons of gold, yet will he not give a thousand poor louis to have the pleasure of seeing Madame Denis at Berlin. He shall give them; otherwise I myself will not go." This dispute was terminated by a ludicrous incident. One morning, as

I went to call upon him, I met his friend Thiriot in the garden of the Palais Royal, and as he was in search of literary news, I asked him if there was any. "Yes, indeed, there is, and very curious too," said he. "You are on your way to M. Voltaire's; there you will hear it; for I mean to go there also, as soon as I have taken coffee."

I found Voltaire writing in bed. He asked me, "What news?" "I know none," said I; "but Thiriot, whom I met at the Palais Royal, says he has something very interesting to tell you. He will be here presently."

"Well, Thiriot," said he, "you have curious news, then, to tell us?" "Oh! very curious, and with which you will be vastly delighted," replied Thiriot, with his sardonic laugh, and the nasal twang of a Capuchin. "Well, let us hear what you have to say." "I have to say that Arnaud Baculard has arrived at Potsdam, and that the King of Prussia has received him with open arms." "With open arms!" "That Arnaud has presented him with a poem." "Stupid, bombastical stuff?" "Not at all, vastly pretty; so much so, that the King of Prussia has written another in answer." "The King of Prussia, a poem to Arnaud! Come, come, Thiriot; they have been making jest of you." "That may be; only I have the two poems in my pocket." "Quick, let's see; let me read these two masterpieces. How insipid! how flat! how mean!" said he, reading Arnaud's poem. Then, taking up the King's, he read for a moment in silence, with a look of pity. But when he came to these lines—

"Voltaire's begins to set,
But you are in your dawn"

—he sprang up and leapt out of bed, bounding with rage. "Voltaire beginning to set, and Baculard in his dawn! and a King can write such enormous folly! Ah! let him never think of anything but reigning."

We had the greatest difficulty, Thiriot and I, to keep from bursting into laughter when we saw Voltaire dancing about in his shirt and furiously apostrophising the King of Prussia. "I will go," said he, "yes, I will go, and teach him to know men;" and that instant his journey was fixed. My suspicion is that the King of Prussia intentionally applied this spur to him, otherwise I doubt much if he would have gone, so irritated was he at the refusal of the thousand louis, not at all out of avarice, but from mortification at not having attained his object.

Eager, in the utmost degree, to have his own will in everything, he felt an incredible repugnance, even on the most trifling occasions, to yield any point which he had once resolved upon. I saw another singular instance of this before his departure. He had taken a fancy to provide himself with a cutlass, and one morning that I was with him a bundle was brought, out of which he was to choose. He chose accordingly. But the merchant demanded a louis for his cutlass, and Voltaire had taken it into his head to give only eighteen livres. Hereupon he begins calculating every particular of its value; he adds, that the merchant's countenance bears the stamp of honesty, and that, with that truth which is painted on his forehead, he will surely confess that eighteen livres is a very good price for his instrument. The merchant accepts the praise which he is pleased to bestow on his physiognomy, but answers that, as an honest man, he could not but keep to his first word; that he had asked only the precise value of the article, and that to sell it lower would be doing an injury to his children. "You have children, then?" said Voltaire. "Yes, sir, I have five—three sons and two daughters, the youngest of whom is twelve years old." "Very well; we shall contrive to get places for your sons and portions for your daughters. I have friends in the finance; I have interest in the public offices—but let us put an end to this little business; here are your eighteen livres; let no more be said on the subject." The honest merchant made the most humble acknowledgments for the patronage with which Voltaire was pleased to honour him, but he kept to his first price as to the cutlass and would not abate a farthing. I shall not dwell upon this scene, though Voltaire continued for a quarter of an hour, vainly employing every form of seductive eloquence, not to save six livres, which he would have given to a beggar, but to obtain his will by the power of persuasion. He himself was obliged to yield, and, with an angry and mortified air, he threw upon the table the crown which he was so unwilling to bring forth. The merchant, as soon as he got his money, thanked him for his kindness and went away.

"Well," said I, in a low voice, as he departed, "I am very glad of it." "What are you very glad of?" asked Voltaire, angrily. "That the family of this poor man is no longer to be pitied. His sons, it seems, are all to get places and his daughters marriage portions, while he himself has, in the meantime, sold his cutlass at his own price, which you have paid in spite of all your eloquence." "And this is what you are glad of, you obstinate Limosin?" "Oh, yes, I am quite delighted; had he yielded I could willingly have beaten him." "Well," said he, laughing to himself, after a moment's silence, "do you know that if Molière had witnessed such a scene, he would have turned it to some account." "Indeed," said I, "it would have been a counterpart to that of M. Dimanche." Thus it was that any anger, or rather impatience, which he might feel towards me, ended always in mildness and friendship.

I was in Voltaire's secret as to the light in which he viewed the King of Prussia, and thought myself also in the secret of that monarch with regard to the little sincerity of the caresses he lavished on Voltaire. I had some presentiment, therefore, of the misunderstanding which would take place when they came into contact with each other. A soul so imperious and a mind so ardent could hardly be compatible. I was in great hopes, therefore, of soon seeing Voltaire return more out of humour with Germany than he was with his own country. But the new cause of disgust which he met with in taking leave of the King, and the rage he expressed, left me no longer this consoling hope. In his character of gentleman-in-ordinary to the King's bedchamber, he thought he might venture to ask if he had any commands for the King of Prussia; but the King, instead of replying, abruptly turned his back on him. And such was his fury that, as soon as he was out of the kingdom, he returned his patent as historiographer of France, and accepted, without his consent, the cross of the Order of Merit which the King of Prussia presented him, though only to strip him of it shortly after.

The view of so much bitterness and tribulation mingled in the life of this great man, only gave me a more formidable impression of the literary career in which I had entered and a more pleasing one of the obscure repose which I was to enjoy at Versailles.

Here, thank heaven, close the errors of my youth. I now begin to enter upon a less dissipated, a more correct and more uniform mode of life, less exposed to the tempest of passion; my character, too long various and changeable, now acquired some degree of consistence; and reason, placed on a solid foundation, could silently employ itself in regulating my conduct.

BOOK V

THE first thing I did after arriving at Versailles and seeing M. de Marigny, was to go and thank Madame de Pompadour. She expressed pleasure at seeing me well settled, and added, with a look of kindness, "Men of letters have their heads full of certain ideas of equality, which make them sometimes inattentive to the forms of society. I hope, Marmontel, that in your intercourse with my brother, you will never lose sight of them." I assured her that my sentiments and my duty were here in perfect unison.

I had become acquainted with M. de Marigny in the society of the *Menus Plaisirs*, and had learned through them the kind of man to whom his sister had exhorted me to be so attentive. Of my own good intentions I was quite sure; gratitude alone would have prompted me to all the respect which our relative situations called for. But, besides good intentions, the strictest care was requisite to humour an uneasy and jealous self-love which rendered him, in the highest degree, susceptible of mistrust and suspicion. His weakness lay in dreading lest men should not esteem him sufficiently, and, out of envious malignity, should say all that might be said of his birth and fortune; and this uneasiness rose to such a height, that he fell into a passion if anyone in his presence whispered a few words to another. With the view of sounding the opinion which was entertained of him, he used often to talk of himself with a pretended humility in order to see if men would take pleasure in hearing him under-valued, and then if the least smile or equivocal expression escaped them, the wound it made was deep and incurable. He had all the essential qualities of a virtuous man, and even some agreeable qualities, such as a good and well-cultivated understanding, a correct taste in the arts, which he had studied, having taken a journey into Italy for that express purpose; and his whole behaviour was so frank and upright that he might have been as interesting as he was respectable. But all was spoiled by this peculiarity of his temper and by the rudeness and bluntness of manner in which he often indulged.

You must perceive, my children, how watchful it was necessary to be in order to keep always on friendly terms with a man of this character. But I knew him, and made this knowledge the rule of my conduct. Besides, whether with or without design, he pointed out to me, by his own example, the footing on which he wished me to converse with him. When we were by ourselves he assumed an easy, gay and friendly air, such as he used to have in the society where we formerly met. When there were others present, and, above all, when these were artists, he talked with esteem and with an air of affability; but through his politeness you could distinguish the gravity of the superior and the man in power. I regulated myself by this example. I made a distinction between myself as secretary of buildings and as a man of letters and of the world. In public I set an example to the two academies of which he was head, and to all the artists employed under his orders, of the respect which we owed to his official situation. At his audiences no one, either in behaviour or words, could be more sedate or respectful. When we were by ourselves, or in the society of our common friends, I resumed the easy air which was natural to me, yet without ever becoming familiar. As raillery could never be carried on between us on an equal footing, I gently declined it. He had a certain turn for ridicule, not always very delicate nor in very good taste, with which, however, he was fond of diverting himself; but it was not safe to play with him at that game. Never was there a man so fond of raillery, yet so unable to bear it himself. A repartee which would only have slightly touched another, wounded him. I therefore saw the necessity of keeping within the bounds of a moderate gaiety and never exceeding it. He, on his side, saw a kind of delicacy in my reserve, and always chose to hold a language corresponding to mine. In what regarded himself, indeed, he sometimes showed a desire to scrutinise my thoughts. For instance, when I went to congratulate him on the rank which he had obtained in the order *du Saint Esprit*, "M. Marmontel," said he, "the King wipes off the meanness of my birth." I answered what I thought, that his nobility was in his soul, which was fully equal to that of blood. On another occasion, at his return from the play, he told me of his having found himself in an awkward situation. As he sat on the balcony, and thought only of laughing at the little piece that was acting, he suddenly heard one of the performers, in the character of a drunken soldier, say, "What! shall I have a handsome sister and make nothing of her, when so many others raise a fortune by their third cousins." "Only imagine," said he, "my embarrassment and confusion. The pit, luckily, did not observe me." "Sir," replied I, "you had nothing to fear; you justify so completely what is done in your favour that no one thinks of disapproving it." And, indeed, I saw him fill his place in so worthy a manner that favour towards him seemed no more than justice.

Thus it was that I spent five years under his orders, without the slightest dissatisfaction either on his side or mine; and after I left the place he had given me, he still continued my friend. I had even the good fortune, without his knowledge, of being more than once useful to him with his sister, who reproached him with giving harsh refusals to the demands that were addressed to him. "Madam," said I, "I, myself, have taken down these answers," and I showed them to her; "but," added I, "with this sort of people, however politely a refusal be made, it is always bitter." "Well," said she; "and why so many refusals? have I not enemies enough, without his raising me more?" "Madam," replied I at last, "this is an inconvenience attached to his office; but it is also a duty; there is no medium; he must either become unworthy, by betraying the interests of the King out of complaisance to his courtiers, or must refuse the unreasonable demands which are made from every quarter." "How did other people do?" urged this foolish woman. "Other people did badly if they did otherwise; but observe, madam, that less was required of them: for abuses increase as they go on, so that perhaps a more timid compliance is now expected. But I, who know his principles, dare assure you that he would sooner leave his office than yield a point of duty." "You are an honest man," said she, "and I thank you for having defended him so well."

I never in my life spent a pleasanter time than these five years at Versailles, for Versailles was to me divided into two regions: one was that of intrigue, of ambition, of envy, and of all the passions generated by servile interest and needy extravagance—there I seldom or never went; the other, in which I passed my life, was the abode of silent and peaceful labour, and after labour was over, of gaiety in the bosom of repose. Free from anxiety, almost wholly my own master, and with only two days of the week to spend in the easy duties of my office, I had marked out for myself an employment equally agreeable and interesting. This was a regular course of study, in which, with the pen in my hand, I surveyed the different branches of ancient and modern literature, and compared them impartially with each other. I became, as it were, an independent man, belonging to no country and to no age. In this spirit I selected from my reading the passages which struck me, and the reflections which facts suggested. A mass of materials was thus formed, which were first employed in the articles I wrote for the "Encyclopædia," which afterwards furnished the materials of my "French Art of Poetry," and which have since been collected together in my "Elements of Literature." In this employment there was no restraint, no anxiety as to the opinion of the vulgar. I studied for myself; I expressed my thoughts and sentiments with perfect freedom; and this course of reading and meditation derived a particular interest from the discoveries which I thought myself able to make of relations between the theory and practice of the art of composition, between its processes and those of Nature—relations which seemed likely to be of use in fixing the rules of taste. I had few books of my own; but the Royal Library supplied them in abundance. When the Court took a journey I made a large provision, as I then followed M. de Marigny; and the woods of Marly, the forests of Compiègne and Fontainebleau were the closets in which I studied. I had not the same pleasure at Versailles; there the only inconvenience I experienced was the want of walks. Who would believe it?—in the finest days of summer these magnificent gardens could not be entered. When the hot weather, in particular, came on, these pieces of water, the fine canal, the basins of marble where the bronze seemed to breathe, spread far and wide pestilential vapours; so that the waters of Marly were brought at great expense to lie in this valley only that they might poison the air which we breathed. I was obliged to go to the woods of Verrières or Sataury in search of pure air and wholesome shade.

There was a difference, however, in my manner of spending my time during these excursions. At Marly, at Compiègne, I lived solitary and temperate. At Compiègne, I at one time, for mere pleasure, being in perfect health, lived six weeks on a milk diet. Never was my soul more calm or more peaceful than during this regimen. My studious days flowed on with unalterable uniformity; my nights were spent in the sweetest slumber. I awoke in the morning and swallowed a large bowl of milk, warm from my black cow, and then shut my eyes again to sleep another hour. Discord might have subverted the world without ever troubling me. At Marly, I had only one amusement, which was the curious spectacle of the royal card-table in the drawing-room. There, round a table of lansquenet, I saw men tormented with passions which respect forbade them to show. The eager thirst of gold, hope, fear, the grief of losing, the ardent desire of gaining, joy after gaining a card, despair after losing one, rapidly followed each other in the mind of the players, under the immovable mask of frigid tranquility.

At Fontainebleau, my life was less solitary and less sedate. The suppers of the *Menus Plaisirs*, the royal huntings, public places, drew me into frequent dissipation, which I had not strength of mind to avoid.

At Versailles, too, I had my amusements; but they were regulated according to my plan of study and employment, so as never to be anything more than recreations. My daily society was that of the first clerks, almost all agreeable men, vieing with each other who should give the best entertainments. In their intervals of leisure, they enjoyed the pleasures of the table; they were epicures nearly for the same reason that devotees are so. The Abbé de la Ville, for instance, was very particular concerning the procuring of good wine. His steward went every year to gather the unpressed wine from the best cellars in Burgundy, and kept the casks always in his eye.

Dubois, the first war clerk, was the one who regarded me with the most cordial friendship. He would have done me every service that his office allowed had I given him an opportunity. But with regard to myself, I had enjoyment only in view; and if I derived any advantage from the acquaintance of the first clerks, it was quite spontaneous on their part, and without any solicitation from me. Of this you will soon see an instance.

Among these laborious sybarites, the most lively, seducing and voluptuous, though of the weakest health, was Cromot, who has made so brilliant a figure under a succession of ministers. The easy and agreeable manner in which he did business, and in particular, his dexterity, captivated them in spite of themselves.

When I knew him he was the intimate and favourite secretary of M. de Machault. This was an acquaintance which many would have envied, but which I valued only for the pleasure it yielded. At the same time, Fortune, studying my interest, unknown to myself, brought me at Versailles into the company of a lady whose acquaintance I found no less useful. She was the particular friend of Bouret, the farmer-general, who had the charge of appointing to vacant offices. This woman, who soon became my friend, and continued so till her death, was the lively and agreeable Madame Filleul. She was staying to supper at Versailles, and I was invited to sup along with her; I excused myself by saying that I was obliged to return to Paris. She immediately offered to take me, and I accepted a place in her carriage. On our becoming acquainted, she spoke of me to her friend Bouret, and probably inspired him with some desire of knowing me. Circumstances were thus prepared, the most favourable to the dear object of my wishes.

My eldest sister had arrived at a marriageable age; and though I could give her but a small portion, a number of suitable offers presented themselves in my native town. I preferred the man whose character and talents I knew to be the best; and my choice proved to be the same that my sister would have made had she followed her own inclination. My schoolfellow Odde had, ever since he left school, been remarkable for piety, for propriety of conduct and for application to business. His character was mild and gay, full of candour and perfectly uniform; his morals were incorruptible and he was always like himself. He is still alive, nor do I believe that the world contains a purer soul. In him, manhood produced no change, but that of passing from the age of innocence to the age of virtue. His father, at his death, had left him little fortune; but, in its stead, the inheritance of a rare and precious friend. This friend, in whose praise I have often heard M. Turgot speak, was a M. de Malesaigne, a genuine philosopher, who, in our remote village, spent his life almost alone, reading Tacitus, Plutarch and Montaigne, taking care of his lands and cultivating his gardens. "Who would believe," said Turgot to me, "that a little village of Limosin should contain such a man? I never met with any person who, on subjects of government, was better informed, or thought more judiciously." It was this worthy friend of M. Odde who requested me to give him the hand of my sister. I was pleased; but his letter appeared to me to insinuate a hope that Odde, through my interest, might obtain an office. I replied that I would do everything in my power for him, but that my interest not being so great as was supposed in my own province, I was sure of nothing myself and could therefore make no promise. M. de Malesaigne replied that my frank declaration was of more value than rash assurances; and the marriage was celebrated.

A month after, Bouret came to employ himself, along with the Minister of the Finances, in filling up the vacant places, and I dined with him at the house of our friend Cromot. It would have been difficult to bring together two men of a more lively and ready wit, or fuller of ingenious sallies. Yet, in Cromot you saw more ease, more habitual grace and facility; but Bouret was more eagerly desirous of pleasing, and threw in his observations more happily. This dinner was animated by the gaiety of both, and I soon became master of their tone of conversation. But, as we left table, Bouret recounted a long list of candidates for vacant places, and of persons soliciting for them. These were all persons of importance—the duke such-a-one, the marchioness such-another, the princes of the blood, the royal family; in short, the whole Court and city united. "Well," said I, "what a dilemma have I got into! I have married my sister to a well-informed young man, versed in business, with a great share both of understanding and virtue, and all the portion I could give him was the hope of obtaining an office through my poor interest! I must write and tell him to give up all thoughts of it." "Why," said Bouret, "should you do your sister an ill-office by distressing her husband? Love is soon cooled by bad spirits; therefore leave them hope—it is a good thing till something better comes."

They left me in order to do business with the minister; and when I was at home, a clerk of the office came from them and asked my brother-in-law's name. He got a place that very evening. I need not say how ardently next day I expressed my gratitude. This was the era of a long friendship between Bouret and myself, of which I shall say more hereafter.

Yet the place given to M. Odde appeared to me both too indolent and too obscure for a man of his talents. I exchanged it for one which was more difficult and of less value, in order that his abilities, becoming thus known, might contribute to his advancement. On his way there, his wife and he came to see me at Paris; and I cannot describe my sister's joy at meeting with me. I had them with me for some days, and they were received by my friends with a kindness for which I felt extremely grateful. At the dinners that were given us, it was an affecting spectacle to see the eyes of my sister continually rivetted upon me, unable to satiate herself with the pleasure of viewing her brother. Hers, indeed, was less a fraternal than a filial affection.

Scarcely had she arrived at Saumur than she formed an intimacy with a relation of Madame de Pompadour, whose husband had a place in that city worth two thousand crowns. It was in the salt office. This young man, called M. de Blois, was seized with the same illness of which my father, my mother and my brother had died. We knew too well that it was incurable; and Madame de Blois did not conceal from my sister that her husband had but a short time to live. "My good friend," said she, "it would be at least some consolation to me were M. Odde to succeed him in his place. Madame de Pompadour will have the disposal of it; get your brother to apply to her in your favour." My sister gave me this information, of which I availed myself, and obtained a promise of the situation. But on the death of M. de Blois I was informed by Madame de Pompadour's steward, that she had given this very place as a marriage portion to a girl in whom she took an interest. Struck as with a thunderbolt, I went to call upon her, and, as she was passing to go to mass, I asked with a respectful confidence for the employment which she had promised me for my sister's husband. "I had forgotten you," said she, walking on, "and have given it to another; but you shall have something as good." I waited her return, and asked for a moment's audience. She allowed me to follow her.

"Madam," said I, "my petition is no longer for employment or money, but it is for my honour, of which I beseech you not to deprive me, for by doing so you would give me a death-blow." She was struck with this introduction, and I continued: "Thinking myself as sure of the place you promised as if already in possession, I mentioned it to my brother-in-law. He told in Saumur that I had your promise; he wrote it to his family and mine; it is thus spread over two provinces. I, myself, talking of your kindness, have boasted of it both at Versailles and Paris. Now, madam, no one will be convinced that you could have granted the place to another after promising it formally to me. It is well known that, when inclined to favour anyone, you have a thousand ways of doing so. Thus I alone shall be dishonoured by the accusation of falsehood and groundless boasting. Madam, I have learned to struggle with adversity and to live in indigence, but I cannot live in shame, despised by every virtuous man. You kindly offer to make a compensation to my brother-in-law, but, madam, after I am branded as an impudent liar, will you restore me the reputation of an honest man, of which alone I am ambitious? Can your benefits wipe off the stain it will have received? Make a compensation, madam, to your other charges for the place, which a moment's forgetfulness has made you promise. You may easily procure them one more advantageous. But do not inflict upon me this irreparable injury, which would drive me to the utmost despair." She tried to persuade me to wait, assuring me that my sister should lose nothing. But I persisted in saying, that "having boasted of obtaining the place of Saumur, I would have no other were it a hundred times better." After saying these words I withdrew, and the place was given me.

I had, as you see, and as you will have occasion to see again, means of making my fortune, which might have raised my ambition; but having provided for the welfare of my family, I was so satisfied and so peaceful that I desired nothing further. The family with whom I associated most intimately and most habitually at Versailles was that of Madame de Chalut, an excellent woman, who had not much wit, but a great deal of good sense, and whose character was inestimably mild, equal and sincere. After being favourite waiting-maid to the first Dauphiness, she had been transferred to the second, by whom she was still more beloved. This Princess had not a more faithful, more tender, or more sincere friend; nay, she had not, perhaps, another real friend in France. Accordingly, her heart and her most secret thoughts were open to her; and in the most delicate and difficult circumstances she had recourse to her alone for advice and consolation. These sentiments of confidence and attachment were communicated from the mind of the Dauphiness to that of the Dauphin. Wishing to marry Mademoiselle Varanchan (for that was her maiden name) and to give her a rich portion, they were both determined to sell their most valuable jewels; but the Comptroller-General prevented them by obtaining from the King an appointment to the office of farmer-general for the man who should marry her. This sufficiently shows the interest she possessed with her master and mistress, and I may add that there was nothing she could not have done for me. Yet, though twenty years her friend, I never asked anything; I had formed so noble and pure an idea of friendship, and felt it so warmly in my own breast, that I should have thought it profaned and degraded by the mixture of any ambitious views. The more Madame de Chalut would have been disposed to lavish her good offices, the more I thought it became me to be discreet and disinterested.

I failed not to embrace opportunities of paying my court to her master and mistress, but solely with the view of pleasing her; and if I sometimes composed verses for them, it was she alone who inspired them. This brings to my recollection a singular enough scene.

Madame de Chalut after her marriage still continued in the service of the Dauphiness, and became only the more assiduous in her attentions. This Princess was so fond of her that she could not bear her absence without affliction. She always kept house, therefore, at Versailles, and every time I went there before making it my residence, her house was my home. The Dauphin's recovery from the small-pox was celebrated there by a *fête*, to which I was invited. I found Madame de Chalut in a transport of joy and of admiration at the conduct of her mistress, who had watched night and day by her husband's bedside, and had taken the most tender care of him during his illness. My heart was penetrated by the animated account she gave of it. I wrote a poem on this affecting subject; the interesting nature of the picture rendered the painter successful, and these verses at Court met with, at least, a degree of favour such as arises from being suited to the occasion. The Prince and Princess on reading them were affected even to tears. Madame de Chalut was directed to tell me that they had been much interested by the perusal, and would be happy to see me for the purpose of expressing it themselves. "Present yourself," said she, "to-morrow, at the time of their dinner; you will be satisfied with the reception they intend to give you." I was careful to keep the appointment. There was little company. I was placed opposite to them at two steps from the table, quite by myself, and in a very conspicuous situation. As soon as they saw me they whispered to each other, then turned their eyes upon me and whispered again. I saw their thoughts taken up about me; yet both alternately allowed what they were going to say to expire, as it were, on their lips. Thus passed the time of dinner, after which the whole company went away, and I among the rest. Madame de Chalut had served at table, and you may suppose how impatient she was under this long mute scene. I was to dine with her, that we might have an opportunity of expressing our mutual pleasure at the reception I should have met with. I went and waited for her, and when she came I said, "Well, madam, must I not be very much flattered by all the obliging and agreeable things that have been said to me." "Do you know," said she, "how they spent the whole time of dinner? Just in inviting each other to speak to you, without either being able to summon courage sufficient." "I really did not know," said I, "that I had been so dignified a character, and must certainly be proud of the respect with which I have inspired the Dauphin and Dauphiness." This contrast of ideas appeared to us so diverting that we laughed heartily, and I considered as said everything they had intended to say.

The species of kindness with which I was viewed in this Court procured me, however, attention and credit on an interesting occasion. Aurora, daughter of Mademoiselle Verriere, was registered as daughter of Marshal Saxe, and, after the death of her father, the Dauphiness intended to take charge of her education; this was her mother's highest ambition. But the Dauphin took it into his head to say that she was my daughter, and the assertion produced its effect. Madame de Chalut mentioned it, laughing, but I took up this jest of the Dauphin's in the most serious manner. I accused him of levity, and offered to prove that my connection with Mademoiselle Verriere was only during the Marshal's journey into Prussia, more than a year after the birth of this child. I said that it would be an inhuman mode of depriving her of her real father to make me be considered as such. Madame de Chalut undertook to plead this cause before the Dauphiness, and the Dauphin yielded. Aurora was therefore educated at their expense in the convent at St. Cloud, and Madame de Chalut, who had a country-house at St. Cloud, undertook, out of love to me and at my entreaty, to superintend her education.

I have still to speak of two other particular acquaintances which I formed at Versailles; one was an acquaintance of mere convenience, with Quesnai, Madame de Pompadour's physician; the other, with Madame de Marchais and her intimate friend, the Count d'Angiviller, a young man of a noble character. With the lady, I soon formed a very close intimacy, which has lasted for forty years, and which neither time nor events have been able to alter.

I shall begin with Quesnai, as being the least interesting. He was lodged, not very spaciously, in the house of Madame de Pompadour, and thought of nothing from morning to night but political and rural economy. He imagined he had reduced the science to calculations and axioms, which proof was irresistible; and, as he was forming a school, he chose to take the trouble of explaining to me his new doctrine, with the view of making me a disciple and proselyte. Wishing to make him my mediator with Madame de Pompadour, I bent my whole understanding to comprehend these truths which he held out as self-evident, but which appeared to me quite vague and obscure. It was in vain to attempt persuading him that I understood what, in fact, was to me wholly unintelligible. But I listened with patient attention, and allowed him to hope that I might at length be enlightened and impressed with his doctrine. This would have been enough to gain his favour; but I did more. I applauded an occupation which appeared to me really deserving of esteem, for it tended to recommend agriculture in a country where it was too much despised, and to turn the researches of men of science into this direction. I had even an opportunity, offered by himself, of flattering him on a subject which he viewed with such interest.

An Irishman of the name of Patullo, having written a book in which he proved the superiority of English agriculture over ours, had, through Quesnai, obtained permission to dedicate this book to Madame de Pompadour; but this dedication was ill-written. Madame de Pompadour, after having read it, bade him apply to me, and ask me, in her name, to give it a careful revisal. I found it easier to write a new one, and speaking of country labourers, I placed their condition in so interesting a point of view, that Madame de Pompadour read the dedication with tears in her eyes. Quesnai perceived it, and I cannot express how much he was pleased with me. His way of serving me with the Marchioness was now and then to drop a word or two in my praise, seemingly undesigned, but which yet produced its effect.

With regard to his character, I shall mention only one anecdote, which will show it in a clear point of view. He had received his appointment through the interest of the old Duke de Villeroy and of a Countess d'Estrade, the friend and flatterer of Madame d'Etioles. This last lady, not suspecting that she was cherishing a serpent in her bosom, had raised her from a wretched condition and brought her to Court. Quesnai was therefore bound by gratitude to Madame d'Estrade, when that intriguing woman abandoned her benefactress, attached herself wholly to the Count d'Argenson, and joined with him in a conspiracy against Madame de Pompadour.

It is difficult to conceive how a woman so disagreeable in every respect should, notwithstanding the ugliness of her mind and person, have seduced a man of d'Argenson's character, understanding and age. But she had the merit of sacrificing to him the person to whom she owed her all, and of being, for love of him, the most ungrateful of creatures.

Quesnai, however, without being affected by these hostile passions, continued, on the one side, to be the incorruptible servant of Madame de Pompadour, without forgetting, on the other, the obligations he owed to Madame d'Estrade. That lady assured M. d'Argenson of his fidelity; and though he made no secret of going sometimes to visit them, Madame de Pompadour felt no anxiety on that account. They, on their side, felt as much confidence in him as if no tie had attached him to Madame de Pompadour.

Now, listen to what was told me after d'Argenson's exile by Dubois, who had been his secretary. He, himself, shall speak; I recollect perfectly his narrative, and you may imagine yourself hearing it.

"With the view," said he, "of supplanting Madame de Pompadour, M. d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrade had inspired the King with a passion for the young and handsome Madame de Choiseul, the wife of the *menin*. The intrigue had made such progress that the catastrophe was now at hand. The rendezvous was given; the young lady had gone to it, and the interview still continued, while M. d'Argenson, Madame d'Estrade, Quesnai and myself were together in the minister's closet. We two were mute witnesses; but M. d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrade were extremely interested and extremely anxious about what should be the issue. After waiting a long time, Madame de Choiseul enters, with her hair dishevelled, and in a state of disorder which announced her triumph. Madame d'Estrade flies to meet her with open arms, and asks if she has gained her point. 'Yes,' replied she, 'I have; I am beloved; he is happy; she is to be dismissed; I have received his promise.' At these words there was a loud burst of joy through the cabinet. Quesnai alone showed no emotion. 'Doctor,' said d'Argenson to him, 'there shall be no change in your condition, and we hope you will remain.' Quesnai rose, and coldly replied, 'My lord, I have been attached to Madame de Pompadour in her prosperity, and shall be equally so in her disgrace;' and he immediately went away. We were petrified; but nobody felt the least mistrust. 'I know him,' said Madame d'Estrade; 'he is not a man to betray us.' And, indeed, it was not by him that the secret was revealed, and that the Marchioness de Pompadour was delivered from her rival." Such was the story of Dubois.

Whilst storms were thus forming and dispersing beneath the apartment of Quesnai, he was drawing out his axioms and his calculations of political economy, as quietly and with as much indifference for these Court disturbances, as if he had been at a hundred miles' distance. Below, they were deliberating on peace, on war, on the choice of generals, on the removal of ministers; while we, in our apartment, were treating of agriculture, were calculating the net produce, and sometimes were dining gaily with Diderot, d'Alembert, Duclos, Helvetius, Turgot and Buffon. Madame de Pompadour, not being able to prevail upon this group of philosophers to come down to her drawing-room, came up herself to see and talk with them at table.

The other acquaintance of whom I have spoken was infinitely dearer to me. Madame de Marchais was not only, as I thought, the most lively and agreeable of women, but the sincerest and best of friends, most active, most steady, most deeply interested in whatever concerned me. Imagine all the charms of character, mind and language united in the highest degree, nay, even those of external appearance, though she was not beautiful; imagine, above all, a manner the most gracefully charming; such was this young enchantress. Her mind inexpressibly active, gave to her features and expression a dazzling and delightful animation. Not one of her features was such as a painter would have chosen, but, all together, they had an agreeable effect, which the pencil would in vain attempt to imitate. Her figure, though small, was well rounded, and her deportment was such as to communicate to her whole person a dignified and commanding character. Her mind was exquisitely and extensively cultivated, from the most light and showy literature to the loftiest conceptions of genius; her ideas possessed the utmost acuteness, precision, correctness and rapidity; her expressions were always easily and happily chosen, flowing, as it were, spontaneously and as quick as thought. Her heart was excellent, her kindness inexhaustible; in obliging her friends, she exerted the most uniform and unwearied activity; and all with an air so soft and engaging that you would have been tempted to suspect artifice, could artifice have ever assumed that continued and unalterable equality which was always the distinctive mark of Nature and the only one of her appearances which art could never imitate.

Her society was composed of all the most agreeable persons about Court, and of all those men of letters whose characters were most respectable and talents most distinguished. To Court ladies she was a model of the most elegant and dignified politeness; young women came to her house to study her air and manner. With men of letters, she was on a level with the most ingenious and best informed. No one talked with more ease, precision and method. Her silence was animated by the fire of a spirited and attentive look; she divined men's thoughts, and her replies were arrows which never missed their aim. But the most astonishing thing in her conversation was its variety, and her just sense of what was becoming and suitable. She had always the proper word for the thing, for the occasion and for the person; she was mistress of the nicest distinctions and shades of expression, and said the thing which was best to the whole company and to each in particular. Such was the manner in which this singular woman was able to animate, to embellish, and, as it were, to spread enchantment round her house.

She was a great musician, sang with taste, and had an agreeable voice; she had assisted, therefore, at the little opera of Madame de Pompadour's; and, after this amusement ceased, had continued her friend. She was more careful than myself to keep up that lady's kindness for me, and never missed an opportunity of advancing me in her favour.

Her young friend, M. d'Angiviller, was rendered very interesting by one particular circumstance. He possessed everything which can render a man both agreeable and happy: a handsome figure, a well culti·

vated mind, taste in literature and the arts, an exalted soul, a good heart, the esteem of the King, the particular favour of the Dauphin, and, at Court, a celebrity and respect seldom acquired at his age; yet he always either was, or appeared to be, secretly unhappy. He was inseparable from Madame de Marchais, yet sad and silent in her presence, always the more serious as she was more gay, and trembling, as it were, at the very sound of her voice. His character possessed pride, force and energy; yet, whenever she spoke to him, he was confused, viewed her with a suffering look, and answered in a feeble, hesitating and almost extinguished voice. In her absence, on the contrary, he displayed his fine expression of countenance, talked well and with warmth, and gave up his mind and soul freely to the enjoyment of society. Nothing resembled more the condition of a lover rigorously treated and imperiously ruled over. Yet they spent their life together in the most intimate union, and it was very evident that there was no other man whom she preferred to him. Had this character of an unhappy lover been supported only for a short time, it might have been thought assumed, but he was the same for fifteen years; he was the same after the death of M. de Marchais as in his lifetime, and always till the time when his widow became Madame d'Angiviller. Then the scene was quite changed; the whole authority was transferred to the husband, while the wife became all deference and complaisance, with an air of submissive respect. In my whole observation of human manners, I never met with anything so singular as this voluntary and sudden exchange, which formed afterwards a lot equally happy for both.

In their attachment towards me they always were, and still are, perfectly of the same mind; mine towards them will never alter.

Among my amusements, I have not mentioned the drama, though I had every opportunity of enjoying it at the Court theatre. But I seldom went, and mention it here only to fix the era of an interesting revolution in the art of theatrical representation.

I had long carried on a regular dispute with Mademoiselle Clairon about the best mode of reciting tragic poetry. Her acting appeared to me too splendid, too impetuous; she wanted pliancy and variety, and her immoderate violence partook more of fury than of sensibility. Of this I endeavoured, though cautiously, to convince her. "You possess," said I, "every means of excelling in your art; yet, great as you are, you might easily rise above yourself by using more temperately those powers of which you are now so lavish. You reject your own brilliant successes and those which you have gained for me; you reject the opinion and the advice of your friends; you reject the authority of M. de Voltaire, who himself recites his lines in a laboured tone, and asserts that tragic poetry requires the same pomp in acting, as in style; while I, in return, can only urge an irresistible feeling which assures me that acting, like style, may be dignified, majestic, tragic and yet simple; that tones, in order to be animated and deeply affecting, require gradations, shades, unforeseen and sudden transitions, which they can never have when strained and laboured." She sometimes said, rather hastily, that I would never leave her at rest till she performed tragedy in a familiar and comic tone. "No, no, madam," said I, "that tone you will never have; Nature forbids it; you have it not at the very moment you are speaking. The sound of your voice, your look, your utterance, all your attitudes are naturally noble. Dare only to trust to this admirable nature; be assured your tragic powers will only be heightened."

Other counsels than mine prevailed, so that, weary of importuning her in vain, I had desisted, when the actress herself suddenly adopted my opinion. She was going to perform Roxana at the small theatre at Versailles. I called upon her as she was dressing, and found her, for the first time, attired like a sultana—no hoop, her arms half-naked, and in the truth of Oriental costume. I congratulated her upon this change. "Well," said she, "you shall now be satisfied with me. I have just been on a journey to Bordeaux, where I found only a very small house to which I was obliged to accommodate myself. It occurred to me to bring down my acting to the style of the house, and to make a trial of that simple manner which you have recommended so strongly. It met with the greatest success. I am going to try it again on this small theatre; come and hear me, and if it be as successful here, adieu to the old declamation!"

The event surpassed both our expectations. It was no longer the actress, but Roxana herself who was heard and seen. The audience were quite astonished and delighted. They all asked: "Where are we? We never heard anything like this." I saw her after the play, and was going to talk of the success she had met with. "Ah!" said she, "don't you see that I am undone? In all my characters the costume must now be observed; the truth of dress must be conjoined with that of acting; all my rich theatrical wardrobe must be thrown away. I lose clothes to the value of twelve hundred guineas; however, the sacrifice is made. You shall see me in eight days perform Electra as naturally as I have done Roxana."

It was the *Electra* of Crebillon. Instead of the ridiculous hoop and wide mourning gown which she used to wear, she appeared in the mere dress of a slave, with her hair dishevelled and her arms covered with long chains. She was admirable; and some time afterwards she was still more sublime in the *Electra* of Voltaire. Voltaire had made her recite this part with an unvaried and doleful monotony; but when spoken naturally, it acquired a beauty unknown to himself. On hearing it acted at his theatre at Ferney, where she went to see him, he exclaimed, bathed in tears and transported with admiration, "It is not I who am the author of that—it is herself; she has created her part." And, indeed, the infinity of shades which she introduced, and the manner in which she expressed the passions, of which this part is full, rendered it, perhaps, of all others, that in which she was the most astonishing.

Paris, as well as Versailles, recognised in this change the genuine tragic tone, and the increased appearance of probability which theatrical representation derives from a proper observation of costume. From that time, therefore, all the actors were forced to abandon their fringed gloves, their enormous periwigs, their hats stuck up with feathers, and all the fantastic trappings which had so long shocked the eyes of men of taste. Lekain himself followed Mademoiselle Clairon's example; and from that time the perfection of their talents rendered them rivals worthy of each other.

It may be easily supposed that a mixture of peaceful occupations and varied amusements would have more than indemnified me for the pleasures of Paris. But I had the additional advantage of being allowed to go there when I chose, and spend the time during which the duties of my place left me at liberty. M. de Marigny himself, at the solicitation of my old acquaintances, invited me to visit them.

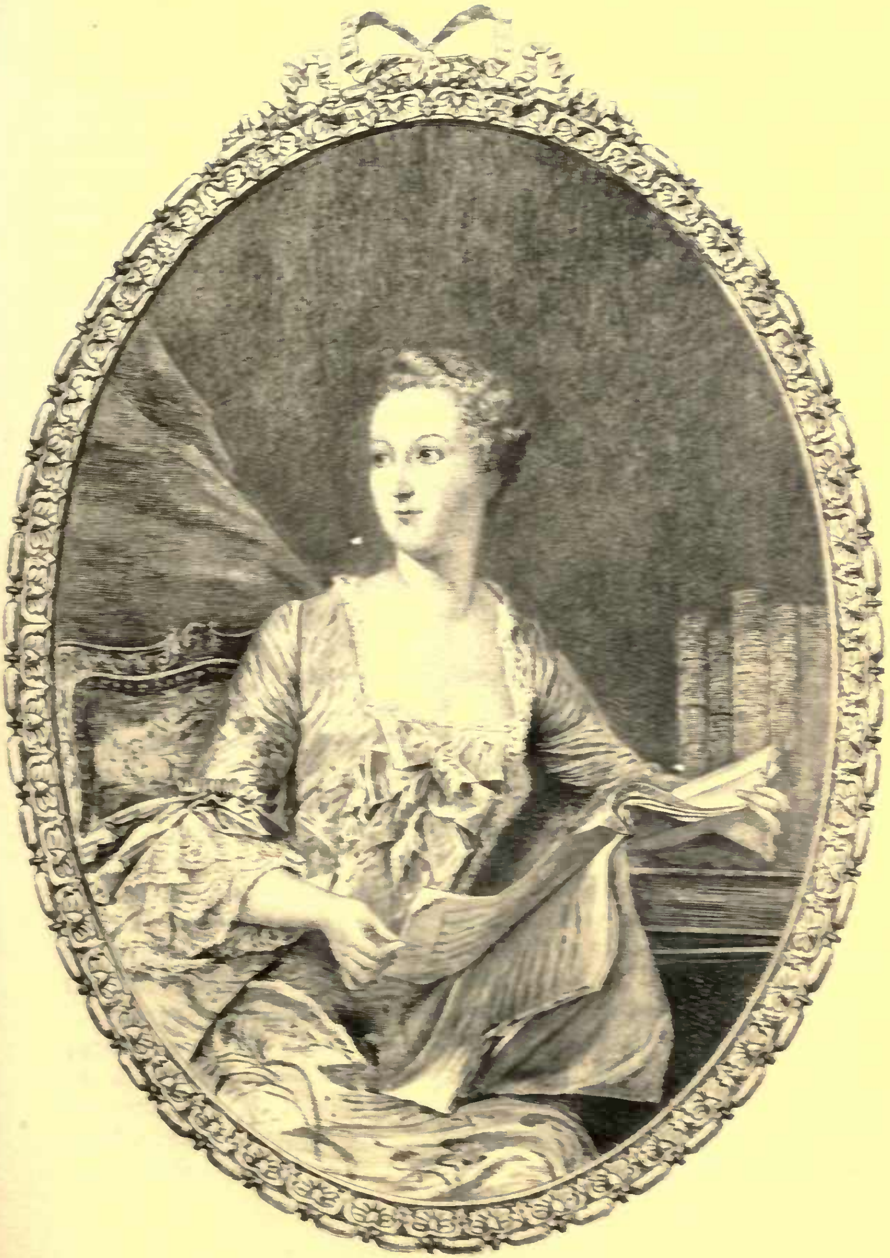
There was one particular in his conduct towards me which I could not avoid remarking, and which would, perhaps, have wounded the pride of another. A little philosophy, however, enabled me to see the reason. In any other house than his own, nobody took greater pleasure in my company. When we dined or supped with our common friends, he enjoyed the esteem and friendship that was expressed for me more than I did myself; he was flattered, he was grateful for it. It was by him that I was introduced to Madame Geoffrin; and out of her regard for him, I was admitted to her dinner of artists, as well as to that of men of letters. Lastly, from the time I ceased to be secretary of buildings, as will hereafter appear, nobody expressed a more eager desire to have me, both as his guest and his friend. Yet, so long as I filled the place of secretary under him, he never once allowed himself to invite me to dinner. The ministers never eat with their clerks; he had assumed this etiquette, and to have made an exception in my favour would have spread jealousy and discontent through all his offices. He never explained himself upon this subject, but you may see that he was so attentive as to let me understand it.

The years which I spent at Versailles were those during which the philosophical spirit was in the greatest activity. D'Alembert and Diderot had hoisted their standard in the immense manufactory of the "Encyclopædia," and all the most distinguished men of letters had rallied round them. Voltaire, on his return from Berlin, from whence he had driven poor d'Arnaud, but had not been able to keep his own ground, retired to Geneva, and there he fanned that spirit of liberty, of independence and of innovation which has since made so much progress. In his wrath against the King he had done imprudent things; but a much greater imprudence was committed by those who, when he wished to return into his native country, obliged him to continue in a land of liberty. The King's answer, "Let him stay where he is," was not well judged. His attacks were not of a kind which can be stopped at the frontiers. Versailles, where he would not have been so daring as in Switzerland and at Geneva, should have been given him as his place of exile. The priests should have opened to him that magnificent prison, the same which Cardinal Richelieu had assigned to the great nobility.

When he applied to have his title of Gentleman-in-Ordinary to the King returned to him, he was himself holding out the end of a chain with which they might

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

ETCHED BY MERCIER FROM A PAINTING BY LATOUR



have fixed him. I must give this testimony in favour of Madame de Pompadour, that she was against his being banished. She took an interest in him, and sometimes enquired if I had heard from him ; and when I answered that it was within her power to hear of him from a shorter distance, she answered with a sigh, "Ah, no! it is not."

From Geneva, however, Voltaire continued to animate the labourers employed on the Encyclopædia. I was of the number; and every time I went to Paris my greatest pleasure was that of meeting with the rest. D'Alembert and Diderot were satisfied with my performances; and this connection drew closer and closer the ties of a friendship which lasted during their whole lives. With d'Alembert it was more intimately, more tenderly, more steadily cultivated; but not less true and unalterable with honest Diderot, whom I always saw with such pleasure and listened to with such delight.

To confess the truth, I at last felt that the distance from Paris to Versailles would interpose too long intervals between the moments of happiness which I tasted in the society of men of letters. Such of them as I most loved and respected were kind enough to say that we were formed for living together, and they held out the French Academy as a prospect on which I might fix my views. From time to time, therefore, I felt a renewal of my desire to enter into the career of literature. But, as a previous step, I wished to secure a fixed and independent livelihood; and this Madame de Pompadour and her brother would have been very glad to procure me. Of this, the following is a clear proof.

In 1757, after the atrocious attempt on the King's person[1] and the great change in the ministry, when M. d'Argenson and M. de Machault were dismissed on the same day, M. Rouillé had obtained the office of postmaster-general, of which the secretaryship was a sinecure of £250 a year. It occurred to me to ask the reversion, convinced that M. Rouillé, in his new place, would not refuse the first thing Madame de Pompadour asked. I applied, therefore, through Dr. Quesnai for an audience. It was fixed for the next evening, and I spent the whole night in contriving what I was to say. My brain got heated; I lost sight of my own object, and dwelling solely on the misfortunes of the State, determined to avail myself of this audience in order to inculcate useful truths. The hours of sleep were employed in composing my harangue, and the morning in writing it out, in order to have it more fully in my mind. I went to Quesnai's in the evening, at the appointed hour. Quesnai, who was busy tracing the *zig-zag* of the *net* produce, did not so much as ask me what I was going to do at Madame de Pompadour's. She sent for me; I went down, and was introduced into her closet. "Madam," said I, "M. Rouillé has been made postmaster-general; the place of secretary to the post-office is in his appointment. Moncrif, who now holds it, is very old. Would it be abusing your kindness were I to entreat you to obtain for me the reversion of it? Nothing can suit me better than this place, and to it I limit my ambition for life." She replied that she had promised it to Darboulin (one of her intimates), but that if it could be got for me, she would make him give it up.

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[1] See note (9) at the end.

After returning thanks: "Madam," said I, "I shall now astonish you. The benefit which I ask is not that in which my mind is at present most interested; it is the situation of the kingdom; the disorder into which it is plunged by this endless quarrel between the parliament and clergy, in which I see the royal authority like a vessel driven by the tempest among rocks, while not a man in council is capable of steering it." After enlarging upon this picture, I added, also, that of a war, which required all the forces of the State, both by land and sea, to be sent abroad, and which produced such a necessity for internal tranquility and concord, for the union of minds and mutual concert. After which, I resumed: "So long as MM. d'Argenson and de Machault were in power, we could ascribe to their disunion the intestine dissensions with which the kingdom is rent, as well as the acts of rigour which, instead of tranquillizing, have exasperated these dissensions. But now that these ministers are dismissed, and that the men who supply their place possess no ascendancy and no influence, consider, madam, that the public have now their eyes upon you, and will henceforth address to you their reproaches and complaints if the evil continues—their blessings, if you procure an effectual remedy. For the sake of your glory and your repose, wait not till necessity commands, or till another performs it; you would then lose all merit, and would be alone accused of the evil which you had not done. All those who are attached to you feel the same anxiety with me, and form the same wishes."

She answered that she was not dismayed, and did not wish her friends to be so; however, she was obliged to me for the zeal I expressed, but bade me not to be so uneasy, as exertions were then being made to quiet all disturbances. She added that she would speak that very day to M. Rouillé, and desired me to call upon her the next morning.

"I have no good news to tell you," said she when I called; "the reversion of Moncrif is already given away. It was the first thing the new postmaster-general asked of the King, and he has procured it for his old secretary Gaudin. Think if there is anything else I can do for you."

It was not easy to find a place which suited me so well as this. Yet, shortly after, I thought myself sure of getting one more agreeable to me, because it would be of my own creation, and would enable me to leave honourable traces of my labours. This requires me to introduce to your acquaintance a character which has shone like a meteor, and whose lustre, though weaker, is not yet extinguished. Were I to speak only of myself, the whole would be soon said; but as the history of my life is a walk through which I am leading my children, they must be made to observe the persons with whom I have had any connection in my passage through the world.

The Abbé Bernis, escaped from the seminary of St. Sulpice, where he had succeeded but badly, was an amatory poet, fresh, blooming, and showy in his dress, who, along with the *gentil* Bernard,[1] used, with his pretty verses, to amuse the gay suppers at Paris. Voltaire called him the nosegay-girl of Parnassus; and at Paris he was more familiarly called *Babet*, from the name of a pretty nosegay-girl of that time. Without any other merit than this, he got himself appointed cardinal and ambassador at the Court of Rome. He had in vain solicited the ecclesiastical authorities for a pension on some abbey. The bishop, who set little value on amatory poetry, and who knew what sort of life this abbé led, had harshly declared that so long as he (the bishop) should be in office, he had nothing to hope; to which the abbé answered, "My lord, I shall wait," an expression which was thought happy, and afterwards became current in the world. His whole fortune then consisted in the canonry of Brioude, which was of no value because of his non-residence, and in a little sinecure at Boulogne-sur-Mer, which he had got I know not how.

He was in this condition when it became known that, at the hunting parties in the forest of Senart, the fair Madame d'Etioles has been the object of the King's attentions. Presently the abbé solicits permission to go and pay his court to the young lady, and the Countess d'Estrade, with whom he was acquainted, obtains this favour for him. He arrives at Etioles by water, with his little packet under his arm. He is desired to recite his verses; he amuses, he applies his whole study to make himself agreeable; and by that superficial wit and poetical varnish, in which consisted his only talent, he succeeds so completely that, in the absence of the King, he was made a confidant of the letters which were exchanged between the two lovers. Nothing suited better the character of his mind and style than a service of this kind. Accordingly, as soon as the new mistress was installed at Court, one of the first effects of her favour was to procure him a pension of a hundred louis on the privy purse, with apartments in the Tuileries, which she had furnished at her own expense. I saw him in these apartments, under the palace roof, the happiest of men, with his pension and Brocatelle furniture. As he was of noble birth, his patroness advised him to exchange the chapter of Brioude for that of Lyons; and she obtained a new set of ornaments for the latter in honour of the new canon. At the same time, he was the public and declared lover of the beautiful Princess of Rohan, which placed him, in the fashionable world, on the footing of a man of quality. Then, all of a sudden, he was appointed ambassador to Venice. He there paid particular attention to the nephews of Pope Ganganelli, and by that means obtained the favour of the Court of Rome. He was recalled from Venice to be a member of the King's council; and concluded, with Count Staremberg, the treaty of Versailles. In return for which, on the resignation of M. Rouillé, he obtained the office of minister for foreign affairs; and, shortly after, a cardinal's hat, which was in the nomination of the Court of Vienna.

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[1] See note (10) at the end.

On his return from his Embassy I saw him, and he treated me as before his prosperity, yet with a shade of dignity, and a little consciousness of being now His Excellency, than which nothing could be more natural.

After he had signed the treaty of Versailles, I congratulated him upon it, and he expressed a desire that I should address a poem to the King, in celebration of the advantages derived from this great and happy alliance. I replied that it would be easier and more agreeable to me to address it to himself. He did not deny that this would flatter him. Well, I wrote this poem ; he was pleased, and his friend Madame de Pompadour was delighted; she wished it to be printed and presented to the King, which was no way disagreeable to the diplomatic abbé. (I say nothing of the Embassies to Spain and Vienna to which he was appointed but did not go, having something better to do at Versailles). Soon after, on an urgent occasion, when he was greatly in want of a safe and diligent man, who could write a good style, he did me the honour of applying to me. The circumstances were as follows: The King of Prussia, having entered Saxony with an army of sixty thousand men, had published a manifesto to which the Court of Vienna had replied. This reply had been translated into Teutonic French and sent to Fontainebleau, the present residence of the Court. It was to be presented to the King on the Sunday following, and Count Staremberg was to distribute five hundred copies on that day. On Wednesday evening, the Abbé de Bernis asked me to call upon him. He was closeted with the Count de Staremberg. They both expressed their affliction at having to publish so ill-translated a manifesto, and said that it would be extremely agreeable both to the Court of Versailles and Vienna if I would get it hastily corrected and printed, so as to be presented and published in four days. We read it together, and, besides the Germanisms of which it was full, I took the liberty of pointing out a number of arguments which were either ill-founded or obscurely stated. They gave me full liberty to make every correction, and having fixed a meeting for next day at the same hour, I went and sat down to my work. At the same time the Abbé de Bernis wrote to M. de Marigny, begging that he would give me up for the rest of the week, as he had occasion for me on a pressing business, which I had chosen to undertake.

I employed almost the whole night and the following day in revising this manifesto and getting it transcribed, so that by the hour of rendezvous I brought it, if not elegantly, yet at least more decently written. They bestowed the utmost praises on my industry and diligence. "But this," said the Abbé, "is not all; we must have this memorial in our hands printed to-morrow morning by the hour of the King's rising; and thus, my dear Marmontel, you must crown your work." "My lord," replied I, "in half an hour I shall be ready to set out. Order me a post-chaise, and write a few lines in your own hand to the lieutenant of police, that the Censor may not retard the printing; I promise to be here early on Sunday morning." I kept my word; but I arrived overcome with fatigue and watching. Some days after he asked me to give him an account of my expenses for travelling and printing. I gave him a very exact one, specifying each article, and he paid me the precise amount. From that time I never heard more of the matter.

However, he continued always repeating that one of the advantages which he hoped to derive from the favour he enjoyed was the power of being useful to me. When, therefore, he became secretary for foreign affairs, I imagined that if his department presented any employment in which I could be useful to the State, to him and to myself, he would be disposed to give it me. Upon these foundations I established my present hope.

I knew that, at this time, the office for foreign affairs was in a state of chaos, which the oldest clerks had much difficulty to unravel. To a new minister, therefore, whoever he was, his place was a long apprenticeship. Talking of Bernis himself, I had heard Bussy, one of these old clerks, say, "Here is the eleventh scholar whom the Abbé de la Ville and I have got sent to us." Now, this scholar was the master whom the Dauphin had chosen to instruct him in politics—a very strange choice for a prince who seemed desirous of acquiring solid information.

I should have been doing a real service, therefore, both to the King, the Dauphin, the Minister, and the State itself, could I have introduced order and light into this chaos of past transactions. I made this proposal in a clear and distinct memorial which I presented to the Abbé de Bernis.

My plan was, first, to distinguish the subjects of negotiation according to their different relations—of place in regard to places, and of date in regard to time. Beginning, then, at a period more or less distant, and dividing what followed into a certain number of eras, I was to extract all interesting matter out of these portfolios of memorials and despatches, to form successively out of them a pretty full historical view of the course of negotiation, in which I could point out the spirit of the different Courts, the views of their cabinets, the political system of their councils, the characters of the kings and ministers; in a word, the springs which, during each particular era, had set these Powers in motion. Three volumes of this course of diplomacy were to be annually put into the minister's hands, and perhaps, if written with care, the Dauphin himself might have read them with satisfaction. Lastly, to bring the subjects more under his eye, a book of tables would have exhibited at a glance, under their proper heads, the respective negotiations and their simultaneous effects in the Courts and cabinets of Europe. For this immense labour, I asked only two clerks' apartments in the office, and the means of keeping up a frugal establishment. The Abbé de Bernis seemed delighted with my plan. "Give me this memorial," said he, after having read it, "I see its excellence and usefulness more clearly than yourself. I will present it to the King." I never doubted of its success; I waited—but waited in vain; till at length, impatient to learn the effect, I put the question to him. "Oh," said he, with an absent air, as he stepped into his chair to go to council, "that is connected with a general arrangement upon which nothing is yet decided." This arrangement has since taken place. The King has caused two houses to be built, one for the war office and the other for foreign affairs. My plan has, in part, at least, been executed, but another has reaped the fruits. *Sic vos non vobis.* After this reply of the Abbé de Bernis, I saw him just once again, upon the day when he was going in a cardinal's dress (red cowl and stockings and a *rochet* trimmed with the richest English point lace) to present himself before the King. I crossed his antechambers between two long rows of attendants dressed in new liveries of scarlet, fringed with gold. I went into his closet and found him as proud as a peacock, more blooming than ever, admiring his own finery, and, above all, never weary of looking at his *rochet* and his scarlet stockings. "Am I not very well dressed?" said he. "Very well," said I, "your new dignity becomes you wonderfully, and I am just come, my lord, to congratulate you." "And what do you think of my lackeys?" "I took them," said I, "for the gilded group who were come to compliment you." These were the last words that passed between us.

I easily consoled myself for lying under no obligations to him, not only because I considered him only as a purpled fool, but because I soon saw him unkind and ungrateful towards his benefactress; for nothing is so burdensome as gratitude when it is due to the ungrateful.

I was happier than he; for study and employment afforded me consolation under any little severities which fortune might inflict. But never having had much stoicism in my character, I paid with less patience a tribute of bodily pain which Nature annually imposed. Though I commonly enjoyed good and full health, I was subject to a headache of a very singular kind. This disease is called the *clavus*, and has its seat under the eyebrow. It arises from the beating of an artery, every pulsation of which, like the wound of a dagger, pierces to the very soul. I cannot express how great the pain is; yet, however keen and deep, one spot alone is affected. This spot is above the eye, the place to which the pulse of an internal artery corresponds. I explain all this that you may the better understand an interesting medical case.

For seven years this headache returned at least once a year, and lasted twelve or fifteen days, not constantly, but with paroxysms like a fever, and every day at the same hour, with little variation; it lasted about six hours, announcing its approach by a tension in the neighbouring veins and fibres, and by stronger, though not quicker, pulsations in the artery where the pain was seated. At first the pain was almost insensible; it constantly increased and diminished in like manner towards the end of the paroxysm. But, for at least four hours, it was in full vigour. One astonishing circumstance is, that at the end of the paroxysm, there remained no trace of pain in this part, and that I had no return, either the rest of the day or the following night, till next day at the hour of the new paroxysm. The physicians whom I consulted had in vain attempted to cure me. Bark, bleeding at the foot, emollient liquids, fumigations, sneezing powders had been all tried unsuccessfully. Nay, some of these remedies, as bark, for instance, only irritated my complaint.

One of the Queen's physicians, Malouin, a man of considerable skill, but a greater Purgon than Purgon himself, had thought of making me wash it with vulnerary infusions. This did me no good; however, at the end of its accustomed period, the complaint went off. Malouin was then quite elated at having performed so complete a cure. I did not disturb his triumph, but he laid hold of this opportunity to give me a lecture. "Well, my friend," said he, "will you henceforth believe in medicine, and in the skill of physicians." I assured him that I was a most staunch believer. "No," said he, "you sometimes allow yourself to talk on this subject with some degree of levity. This injures you in the world. Observe, the most illustrious philosophers and men of letters have always respected our art;" and he quoted me some great names. "Voltaire himself, who so seldom respects anything, has always talked respectfully of medicine and physicians." "Ay, doctor, but there was one Molière." "Well," said he, fixing his eye upon me, and grasping my hand, "well, how did he die?"

At last, for the seventh year, my complaint again attacked me, when one day, whilst the fit was on me, I saw Genson, the farrier of the Dauphin's stables, enter my room. Genson had written some distinguished articles to the "Encyclopædia" on the objects relative to his art. He had made a particular study of the comparative anatomy between the man and the horse. Not only for the diseases, but also for the nourishment and treatment of horses, no one was better informed than he; but he was little practised in the art of writing, and he had recourse to me to improve his style. He came with his papers at the moment when, for three hours, I had been suffering torture. "M. Genson," said I, "it is impossible for me to peruse your labours with you to-day; I suffer too cruelly." He saw my right eye inflamed, and all the fibres of the temple and the eyelid palpitating and spasmodic. He asked me the cause of my complaint; I told him what I knew of it; and after some account of my constitution, my manner of living, and my habitual health, "Is it possible," said he, "that the physicians can have suffered you to linger so long under a disease of which it was so easy to cure you?" "What!" answered

I with astonishment, "do you know its remedy?" "Yes; nothing is more simple. In three days you shall be cured, and even to-morrow you shall be relieved." "How?" asked I, with a feeble and still timid hope. "When your ink is too thick and does not run," said he, "what do you do?" "I put water to it." "Well, then, put water to your lymph; it will flow, and will no longer choke the glands of the pituitary membrane, which at present confines the artery, whose pulsations bruise the neighbouring nerves, and cause you so much pain." "Is that indeed," asked I, "the cause of my disease?" "Certainly," said he. "You have there in the bone a small cavity, called the frontal sinus. It is lined with a membrane which is a tissue of little glands. This membrane in its natural state is as thin as a leaf. It is now thick and choked; it wants to be disengaged; and the means are easy and sure. Dine temperately to-day: no ragoûts, no pure wine, no coffee, nor liqueurs; and, instead of supper this evening, drink as much clear and fresh water as your stomach can properly bear; to-morrow morning drink the same; observe this regimen for a few days, and I predict that to-morrow the pain will decrease, that the day after to-morrow it will be scarcely noticeable, and that the next day it will have disappeared entirely." "Ah! M. Genson, you will be my guardian angel," said I, "if your prediction be realised." It indeed was realised. Genson called on me again; and as I embraced him and announced my recovery, "It is not enough to have cured you," said he, "you must be preserved from a future attack. This part will still be feeble for some years; and till the membrane shall have resumed its spring and elasticity, it will be there that the thickened lymph will again depose. This deposition must be prevented. You have told me that the first symptom of your complaint is a tension in the veins and fibres of the temple and the eyelid. From the moment you feel this inconvenience, drink water, and resume your regimen at least for a few days. The remedy for your disorder will be its preventative. Beside, this precaution will only be necessary for a few years. The organ once re-established, I ask nothing more of you." His prescription was exactly observed, and I obtained from it the full success that he had predicted.

This year, in which by the virtue of a few glasses of water I had relieved myself from so great an evil, was, besides, magic for me, inasmuch as with a few accidental words I conferred a great benefit on an honest man, with whom I had no acquaintance.

The Court was at Fontainebleau, and there I used often to go and pass an hour in the evening with Quesnai. One evening, when I was with him, Madame de Pompadour sent for me and said: "Do you know that La Bruère is dead? He died at Rome. It was he who held the patent of the *Mercury*: this patent was worth a thousand a year to him; there is enough to make more than one happy man, and we intend to add to the new patent of the *Mercury* a few pensions for men of letters. You know them; name those who need pensions and would be willing to receive them." I named Crebillon, d'Alembert, Boissy and some others beside. As to Crebillon, I knew well that he stood in no need of recommendation, but seeing, when I mentioned d'Alembert, that she showed a little displeasure, "Madam," said I, "he is a mathematician of the first rank, a very eminent writer, and a most worthy man." "Ay," replied she, "but hot-headed." I mildly answered that, "without a little warmth, there could be no great genius." "He is passionately fond," said she, "of Italian music, and has set himself at the head of its partisans." "Yet," answered I, modestly, "he has none the less written the preface to the 'Encyclopædia.'" She said no more, but he received no pension. A more serious cause of exclusion was, I believe, his zealous attachment to the King of Prussia, for whom Madame de Pompadour entertained a personal aversion. When we came to Boissy,[1] she asked: "Is Boissy not rich? I should conceive him to be at least in easy circumstances. I have seen him at the play, and always very well dressed." "No, madam, he is poor, but he conceals his poverty." She then urged his having written so many plays. "Yes," said I, "but these have not been all equally successful; and, in the meantime, he had himself and family to support. In short, madam, since I must tell all, Boissy is so wretchedly poor, that had not a friend found out his situation, he would last winter have died of hunger. Wanting bread and too proud to ask for it, he had shut himself up with his wife and son, who were all resolved to perish together and by their own hands, had not this kind friend forced open the door and saved them." "Good God!" cried Madame de Pompadour, "you make me shudder. I will instantly recommend him to the King."

Next morning, when I was at home, Boissy appeared, pale and all in disorder, with an expression resembling joy upon the countenance of grief. The first thing he did was to fall down at my feet. I thought he had been taken ill, and hastened to succour him. I raised him up, and asked what could have thrown him into such a condition. "Ah, sir," said he, "do you not know? You who are my generous benefactor, who have saved my life, and have raised me from an abyss of misery into a situation of unhoped-for ease and fortune! I came to ask a moderate pension upon the *Mercury*, and M. de St. Florentin informs me that the King has bestowed on me the patent itself. He told me I was indebted for it to Madame de Pompadour; I went to return her my thanks; and then I learned from Quesnai that it is all owing to the way in which you spoke of me, which affected Madame de Pompadour so much that she had tears in her eyes."

I was going to interrupt him with an embrace, when he went on, "What can I have done, sir, that you should regard me with so tender an interest? I have seen you very seldom; you scarcely know me; yet you talk of me with all the eloquence of sentiment and friendship." At these words he was going to kiss my hands. "This is too much, sir," said I, "it is time for me to moderate this excessive gratitude; and, having allowed you to unburden your heart, I, in my turn, will explain myself. It was certainly my wish to serve you; in that respect I did no more than justice; for, otherwise, I should have betrayed the confidence of Madame de Pompadour, who did me the honour of consulting me. The rest is wholly owing to her sensibility and goodness of heart. Allow me, then, to congratulate you on your good fortune, and let us both thank her to whom you owe it."

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[1] See note (11) at the end.

As soon as Boissy left me, I went to the minister, and seeing that he received me like one who had nothing to say, I asked "if I had not some acknowledgement to make to him?"—He said "No." "If the pensions on the *Mercury* were given?"—He said "Yes." "If Madame de Pompadour had said nothing of me?"—He assured me she had not said a word, and that if she had, he would willingly have put me on the list presented by him to the King. I was confounded I own, for though I had not mentioned my own name at the time she consulted me, I thought myself quite sure of being among the number of those whom she would propose. I went to her house and very luckily met in her drawing-room Madame de Marchais, to whom I related the whole of my disaster. "Oh," said she, "you are surprised? For my part, I do not wonder at it in the least, it is so like her. She will have forgotten you." She immediately went into the dressing-closet where Madame de Pompadour was, and presently I heard bursts of laughter. I took this as a happy omen; and, accordingly, Madame de Pompadour, as she went to mass, could not see me without laughing anew at having forgotten me. "I guessed quite right," said Madame de Marchais when she saw me; "but the mischief will be repaired." I received a pension of fifty louis upon the *Mercury* and was satisfied.

I knew that if M. de Boissy conducted the journal himself he would do very well; but it was necessary to maintain its reputation, and for that purpose he had neither the connections, the invention, nor the activity of the Abbé Raynal, who, in the absence of La Bruère, conducted it, and conducted it well.

Boissy, destitute of aid and finding nothing tolerable in the papers that were left him, wrote me a letter, which was a real signal of distress. "In vain," said he, "have you procured me the *Mercury;* this benefit is thrown away unless you add to it that of coming to my aid. Let it be prose or verse as you please; anything will be acceptable from you. But I beseech you, in the name of the friendship which I have sworn to maintain for you during the rest of my life, hasten to extricate me from my present distress."

This letter deprived me of rest. I thought I saw the poor creature overwhelmed with ridicule, the *Mercury* losing its reputation, and his own penury appearing. I was in a fever the whole night, and, in this state of violent agitation, was first struck with the idea of writing a tale. After having spent the night without closing my eyes, revolving in my mind the subject of that which I have entitled "Alcibiades," I rose, wrote it at a sitting, as fast as my pen could move, and sent it off. This tale met with unhoped-for success. I had required the author's name to be kept secret. No one knew who he could be; and at Helvetius's dinner, where the most delicate judges were assembled, I had the honour of hearing it ascribed to Voltaire or Montesquieu.

Boissy, quite delighted at the increase of sale which the *Mercury* had derived from the novelty, renewed his entreaties for some some other little pieces of the same kind. I wrote for him the tale of "Soliman II.," then that of the "Scruple," and some others beside. Such was the origin of those moral tales which have since had such circulation in Europe. Here I was more indebted to Boissy than he had been to me. But he did not enjoy his fortune long, and after his death, when his place was to be filled up, Madame de Pompadour said to the King, "Sire, will you not give the *Mercury* to him who has supported its reputation?" The patent was given me, and I was then obliged to quit Versailles. Yet a prospect offered, which at the time seemed surer and better. A kind of instinct, which has always conducted me tolerably well, prevented me from giving it the preference.

Marshal Belleisle was minister of war; his only son, the Count de Gisors, the best educated and most accomplished young man of his age, had just obtained the office of lieutenant-commandant of the carabineers, of which the Count de Provence was colonel. The regiment of carabineers had a secretary attached to the commander's person with a salary of £500 a year, and this place was vacant. A young man of Versailles, called Dorlif, offered himself as a candidate and mentioned that he was my acquaintance. "Well," said the Count de Gisors to him, "ask M. Marmontel to call upon me; I shall be very glad to talk with him." Dorlif's whole acquaintance with me was writing little poems, which he sometimes came and showed me; however, I believed him to be a very good sort of lad and accordingly gave this character of him. "Now," said the Count de Gisors, whom I saw for the first time, "I am going to talk to you confidentially. This young man does not suit the place; I want a man who, from the time he joins me, may become my friend, and whom I may look upon as another self. My father-in-law, the Duke de Nivernois, proposes one, but I am suspicious of the too easy manner in which great men recommend, and if you can give me a man whom you can depend upon for being such as I require (since," added he, "I dare not presume to ask yourself), I will gladly receive him from your hands."

"A month sooner, my lord," said I, "I should have requested for myself the honour of being attached to you. But since the King has granted me the patent of the French *Mercury*, I cannot, without blamable levity, so soon break this engagement; however, I will see if, among my acquaintances, I can find a man to suit you."

Among my acquaintances at Paris there was a young man called Suard,[1] whose understanding was acute, penetrating and correct; his character amiable and his conversation engaging. He was very well versed in literature, talked well, wrote with the very best taste, in a pure, easy and natural style. His sentiments were honourable, and he was particularly prudent and reserved. Upon him, therefore, I cast my eyes, and begged him to call upon me at Paris, where I had gone, to save him the journey. This place appeared to him, in one respect, very advantageous; but in another, full of restraint and hardship. We were then at war; Suard must have followed the Count de Gisors to his campaigns; but he was naturally indolent, and would gladly have had fortune without sacrificing to it his liberty and repose. He asked twenty-four hours to think of it. Next morning he came and told me that he could not possibly accept this place—that it was solicited by his friend Delaire, who was recommended by the Duke de Nivernois. I knew Delaire to be an intelligent and very worthy man, of a steady character, and great strictness of morals. "Bring me your friend," said I to Suard, "he is sure of the place, for I will propose him." Delaire and we agreed just to say that my choice had happened to be the same with that of the Duke de Nivernois. M. de Gisors was delighted with this coincidence, and took Delaire into his service. "I am just setting out," said the gallant young man; "the army has a chance of coming to an immediate engagement, and I wish to be present. You will come and join me as soon as possible." Accordingly, a few days after his arrival, the battle of Crevelt took place, in which he was mortally wounded at the head of the carabineers. Delaire arrived just in time to be present at his funeral.

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[1] See note (12) at the end.

I asked M. de Marigny if he thought my employment as secretary of buildings compatible with that of conducting the *Mercury*. He answered that he thought it impossible to perform the duties of both. "Then," said I, "will you be so good as to dismiss me of your own accord, for I have not courage to make a formal demand." He did so; and Madame Geoffrin offered to accommodate me in her house, which I gratefully accepted, only insisting upon being allowed to pay for my lodgings.

Here then was I, driven back by destiny into that Paris which I had quitted with so much pleasure; here was I, more dependent than ever on that public from which I believed myself disengaged for life. What, then, was become of my resolutions? I had in a convent two sisters, who were now of age to be married; my old aunts were too easy in giving credit, and ruined their trade by contracting debts which I was annually obliged to pay; I was obliged also to provide for my own future support, for I had saved only four hundred guineas, and had employed these in giving security for M. Odde. These causes, joined to the prospect of the French Academy, which I could only reach by the path of literature, and to the attraction of that literary and philosophical society which invited me into its bosom, were the reasons, and must be the excuse, of the inconstancy which led me to renounce the most agreeable, the most delicious repose, and go to compile a journal at Paris, that is, to condemn myself to the labour of Sisyphus, or to that of the Danaïdes.

BOOK VI

HAD the *Mercury* been a mere literary journal, I should, in composing it, have had only one task to perform, one route to pursue. But, formed as it was of various elements, and designed to embrace a multitude of objects, it was necessary to fulfil its destination in every respect. According to the tastes of the subscribers, it had to supply the place of a gazette to the lovers of news; to give an account of theatrical compositions to such as were curious on that subject; to give a just idea of literary productions to those who wished to acquire instruction or amusement by select reading. To the sound and reflecting part of the public, who take an interest in the progress of the useful arts, it had to give an account of experiments and fortunate inventions; while to the lovers of the fine arts, it had to announce the new pieces and sometimes the writings of the artists. That part of the sciences which was obvious to the senses, and which could be an object of general curiosity, was also included within its boundaries. But a local and social interest was particularly necessary for its provincial subscribers. The poet of many a little town in the kingdom expected, from time to time, to find his enigma, his madrigal, his poem inserted; and this, though seemingly the most frivolous, was in fact the most lucrative part of the *Mercury*.

It would have been difficult to conceive a journal which derived its attractions from a greater variety of sources. Such was the idea which I gave in the advertisement to my first volume, published in the month of

August, 1758. "Its form," said I, "renders it susceptible of everything useful and agreeable; and literature has neither flowers nor fruits with which the *Mercury* may not embellish itself. It is at once literary, civil and political; it extracts, it collects, it announces, it embraces all the productions of genius and of taste. It is a kind of rendezvous for the arts and sciences, the canal of communication between them. It is a field which may continually increase in fertility, both by careful cultivation and by the wealth spread over it. It will consist partly of extracts, partly of original essays; the former department belongs wholly to myself, but the success of the latter must depend on the aid I receive. In the critical part, the worthy man whom I succeed, though I dare not hope to fill his place, has left me an example of precision and wisdom, of candour and politeness, which I am determined to follow. I propose to speak to men of letters the language of truth, decency and esteem; and my attention to point out the beauties of their works will justify the liberty with which I shall animadvert on their faults. I know better than anyone, and blush not to own, how much a young author is to be pitied when exposed to insult, but withheld by modesty from making a personal defence. Whoever this author may be, I shall endeavour to afford him, not a passionate vindication, but a just estimate of his merits. A piece of irony, a parody, a stroke of raillery, proves nothing, and throws no light on a subject; these sallies are sometimes amusing, nay, they are more interesting to the bulk of readers, than a just and judicious criticism; the moderate tone of reason has nothing to console envy or flatter malignity, but I have no intention to prostitute my pen to the envious and the ill-natured. To the original part of this work, I intend, indeed, to contribute to the utmost of my power, were it only to fill up blanks; yet I set no value on anything I can do here; all my hope is in the friendly assistance of men of letters, and I dare trust that this hope is well founded. If some of the most respectable have not disdained to make the *Mercury* a vehicle for the amusements of their leisure, and often, even, for the fruits of their serious study at a time when the success of this journal was only of advantage to a single man, what aid may I not expect from the united talents of those who are now interested in its support? The *Mercury* is no longer a private estate; it is a public property, of which I am only the manager and cultivator."

My undertaking was thus announced, and it was well seconded. The time was favourable. A brood of young poets were beginning to try their wings. I encouraged these first flights by publishing the brilliant attempts of Malfilatre.[1] I thereby inspired hopes which would have been fulfilled, had he not been snatched from us by a premature death. The just praises which I bestowed on the poem of "Junonville," rekindled in the feeling and virtuous Thomas[2] those great powers which had been frozen by inhuman criticism. I presented the public with a promising specimen of a translation of the "Georgics" of Virgil, and will venture to say, that could that divine poem have been translated into elegant and harmonious French verse, it would have been by the Abbé Delisle. By inserting into the *Mercury* an heroic epistle of Colardeau,[3] I proved how nearly the style of this young poet approached in melody, purity, grace and dignity to the most perfect models of his art. I talked advantageously of La Harpe's heroic epistles. Lastly, alluding to the success of Lemierre's "Hypermnestra," I said, "Here, then, are three new poets of very high promise; the author of 'Iphigenia in Tauris,' from his judicious and simple mode of gradually increasing the interest of the story, and from passages whose vigour is worthy of the greatest masters; the author of

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[1] See note (13) at the end.

[2] See note (14) at the end.

[3] See note (15) at the end.

'Astarbé,' from the animation of his poetry, from his full and harmonious versification, and from his daring conception of a character which wanted only suitable contrasts to make a great figure; and the author of 'Hypermnestra,' from pictures of the greatest energy. The public," added I, "ought to protect, to encourage, to console them, under the fury of envy. The arts stand in need of the torch of criticism and of the spur of glory. It was not from the Cid persecuted, but from the Cid triumphing over persecution, that 'Cinna' derived its birth. Encouragement inspires little minds with negligence and presumption; but to exalted souls, to lively imaginations, in short, to great talents of every kind, the intoxication of success becomes the enthusiasm of genius. They have only one poison to dread—that which freezes them."

While thus pleading the cause of men of letters, I failed not to qualify moderate praises with a criticism which was pretty severe, but without asperity; and in the same tone that one friend would assume with another. By this spirit of equity and good nature, I gained the favour of young literary men, and had them almost all as contributors.

The tribute of the provinces was yet more abundant. It was not all precious; however, if the pieces sent me in verse and prose were defective only through negligence or want of correctness, I took care to revise them. Nay, sometimes, when a few good lines, or even verses, occurred to me as I went on, I slipped them in without saying a word; nor did the authors ever complain of these little alterations.

In the department of arts and sciences, I had likewise many resources. Medicine at this time was agitated with the question of inoculation. The comet foretold by Halley and announced by Clairault drew the eyes of astronomers. Natural philosophy furnished me with curious observations; for instance, the public thought themselves obliged to me for having acquainted them with the means of cooling liquors in summer. Chemistry brought forward a new remedy against the bite of serpents as well as the inestimable secret of recalling the drowned to life. Surgery communicated to me her fortunate experiments and wonderful successes. Natural history, under the pencil of Buffon, ordered me a variety of pictures out of which to choose. Vaucanson allowed me to give the public a description of his ingenious machines; the architect Leroi and the engraver Cochin, who had traversed as artists, one the ruins of Greece and the other the wonders of Italy, strove which should enrich me with the most brilliant descriptions and learned observations, and my readers were amused by extracts from their travels. Cochin, an intelligent man, whose writings were almost as pure and correct as his engravings, gave me also excellent essays upon those arts which were the objects of his study. I recollect two which painters and sculptors cannot have forgotten—one, upon lights and shades; the other, upon the difficulties of painting and sculpture compared with each other. He dictated to me the account I gave to the public of the exhibition of pictures in 1759, one of the finest ever presented in the gallery of arts. This account was a model of sound and mild criticism; the faults were perceived and pointed out, while the beauties received their full share of praise. Without deceiving the public, we satisfied the artists.

At this very time a new career of eloquence was opened. The Academy invited young orators to employ their talents in the praise of great men. With what pleasure did I then publish that the first who had gained the prize in this list (and that by a panegyric worthy of its subject, upon Maurice de Saxe) was the interesting young man whose courage I had so often rekindled, the author of the poem of "Junonville." He was as much pleased with the frankness of my advice as with the equity of my praise; he had admitted me to his most secret and intimate friendship, had made me the confidant of his thoughts and the censor of his writings.

I had formed a connection with all the academies in the kingdom, both for arts and literature; and, without mentioning their productions which they were pleased to send me, the very subjects of their prizes were interesting. The questions they proposed for discussion displayed sound and deep views, in morals, political economy and the useful arts. I was sometimes astonished at the luminous extent of these questions, which came from the provinces in every quarter; nothing appeared to me to mark more clearly the direction, the tendency, and the progress of the public mind.

Thus, while in its light department it still continued gay and amusing, the *Mercury* failed not to improve in usefulness, consistence, and importance. For my part, I did my best to render it at once useful and agreeable, and often slipped in a tale, into which I always endeavoured to infuse some portion of interesting morality. The apology for the theatre, which I made in reviewing Rousseau's letter to d'Alembert upon public amusements, met with all the success which truth can have in a contest with sophistry, and which reason can have when it brings eloquence to close combat, and crushes it.

But as a man should never be so proudly forgetful as to be guilty of ingratitude, I will not leave you ignorant of one of the resources to which I betook myself in time of need. At Paris, the republic of letters was divided into several classes that had little intercourse with each other. Now, I neglected none of these; little poems which were written in the *bourgeois* circles, if natural and pretty, were extremely acceptable. At the house of a jeweller in la Place Dauphine, I had often dined two poets of the old *opéra-comique*, whose muse was gaiety, and who never felt such a glow of genius as when under the roof of a tavern. Their happiest state was intoxication; but, before getting drunk, they had moments of inspiration sufficient to make one believe all that Horace has said in praise of wine. One, whose name was Galet, had the character of a profligate; I never saw him but at table, and speak of him only as connected with his friend Panard, who was a good fellow, and whom I was fond of.

This profligate, however, was so curious and original as to be worth knowing. He was a grocer in la Rue des Lombards; but as he attended the theatre more regularly than his shop, he was ruined by the time I knew him. He was dropsical, but never abated on that account either his drinking or gaiety; he cared as little for death as for life, so that, in poverty, in captivity, on a bed of pain, nay, almost in the agonies of death, he never ceased to make sport of it all.

After his bankruptcy he took refuge in the Temple, then an asylum for insolvent debtors; and as he daily received accounts from his creditors, "Here," said he, "am I lodged in the chamber of accounts." When his dropsy was about to suffocate him, the vicar of the Temple came to give him extreme unction; "Ah, reverend sir," said he, "you are come to clean my boots; 'tis needless; I go by water." The same day he wrote his friend Collé, and wishing him a good new year, in couplets, to the tune of "Accompagné de plusieurs autres," he thus closed his last piece of gaiety:

"De ces couplets soyez content,
Je vous en ferais bien autant,
  Et plus qu'on ne compte d'apôtres;
Mais, cher Collé, voici l'instant
Où certain fossoyeur m'attend,
  Accompagné de plusieurs autres."[1]

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[1] "You must just be satisfied with these lines; most gladly would I send you a great many more; but, my dear Collé, at this very instant a certain ditcher, with a number of attendants, is waiting for me."

Honest Panard,[1] as careless as his friend, as forgetful of the past, and as indifferent about the future, bore his misfortunes rather with the thoughtlessness of a child than with the tranquility of a philosopher. To provide his own food, lodging and dress, was no concern of his; that care was left entirely to his friends; and he had some who were kind enough to deserve this confidence. Both in his conduct and turn of mind he had much of the easy and simple character of La Fontaine. No man had ever less delicacy in his external appearance, yet this quality appeared in his thoughts and expression. More than once, when he was sitting at table, and the fumes of wine mounting to his head, I have seen issue, from under this heavy and thickly covered mass, extemporary couplets full of ease, delicacy and grace. In compiling, therefore, the *Mercury* of the month, when I wanted a few well-turned verses, I went and called on my friend Panard. "Rummage," said he, "in my wig-box." Much need was there, indeed, to rummage, for here, heaped one upon another, lay scraps of paper, on which were scrawled the verses of this agreeable poet. Seeing almost all his manuscripts spotted with wine, I reproached him on that account. "Oh!" said he, "by all means take these; it is the stamp of genius." So tender was his affection for wine, that he spoke of it always as the friend of his soul; and contemplating, glass in hand, the object of his adoration and delight, his emotion became often so great, that tears started into his eyes. I saw him once shed them for a very singular reason. And do not treat as a fable the following anecdote, which will finish the portrait of a complete drunkard.

Having met with him after the death of his friend Galet, I expressed to him how much I sympathised in his affliction. "Ah! sir," said he, "it is deep and severe indeed! A thirty years' friend, with whom I used to spend my life. In our walks, at the theatre, at the tavern, we were always together. I have lost him. I shall no longer sing, no longer drink with him. He is dead. I am alone in the world. I know not now what will become of me." As he went on with these lamentations the honest man melted into tears, and, so far, nothing could he more natural. But then he added: "He died, you know, at the Temple. I went to weep over his tomb. But, oh! sir, what a tomb! They have laid him under a water-spout; a man who, since he came to years of discretion, never tasted water."

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[1] See note (16) at the end.

You are now going to see me live at Paris with persons of a very different character. I should have a fine gallery of portraits to delineate were my colouring sufficiently brilliant. But I shall, at least, attempt to sketch out a few.

I mentioned that during the lifetime of Madame de Tencin, Madame Geoffrin used to visit her, and the cunning old woman saw so clearly the motive of these visits that she used to say to her guests, "Do you know why Geoffrin comes here? She wishes to see how much she can pick up out of my inventory." The fact is, that when she died, part of her society, and the best which remained (for Fontenelle and Montesquieu were no longer alive) went over to Madame Geoffrin; but the latter did not confine herself to this little colony. She was rich enough to make her house the rendezvous of literature and the arts; and seeing that this would afford her old age an amusing society and a respectable character in the world, Madame Geoffrin had established at her house two weekly dinners, one on Monday for artists, another on Wednesday for men of letters. It is very remarkable that, though this woman had no knowledge either of the arts or of literature, and had never learned anything thoroughly in her life, yet, when placed in the midst of these two societies, she did not seem out of place. She was even quite at ease, for she had good sense enough never to speak of anything she did not know very well; while on every other subject she gave place to persons who were better informed. She was always politely attentive, and never seemed to tire of what she did not understand. But her great art consisted in presiding, in watching, in keeping up her authority over two classes of men who are naturally fond of freedom. She set bounds, however, to this liberty, and by a word or a gesture, as by an invisible thread, could recall any one who attempted to escape. "Well said, indeed," was commonly the signal of caution which she gave her guests; and however animated a conversation at her house might be, yet, whenever it passed the due limit, you might say what Virgil has said of the bees:

> "Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta
> Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt."[1]

Hers was a singular character, not easily discerned and described, because the colouring was faint and much was thrown into shade; it was rather marked too, but had none of those leading features by which a character is defined and distinguished. She was kind, with little sensibility; beneficent, without any of the charms of benevolence; prompt in succouring the unfortunate, but without ever seeing them, lest the sight should give her uneasiness. She was a sure, faithful and even active friend; yet she served her friends with a timid anxiety, lest her own credit and tranquility should be endangered. She was simple in her tastes, in her dress, in her furniture, but nice in her simplicity, having the delicacies of luxury in all their refinement, but nothing of their brilliancy, nor of their vanity. Her air, her carriage and her manner, were modest; yet with a fund of pride and even a little vainglory. Nothing flattered her more than her intercourse with the great. She seldom visited them at their own houses (there she was not at her ease), but she had the art of drawing them to hers by a secret and imperceptible flattery. There appeared to me to be a great deal of address in the easy, natural, half respectful and half familiar air, with which she received them. She was always free and always went to the utmost boundary of respect, but never overstepped it. That she might be in favour with heaven, without breaking with the world, she had formed a kind of clandestine devotion; she went to mass, as others go to an appointment of gallantry; she had an apartment in a convent of nuns and a seat in the Capucin church, but as mysteriously as women of gallantry in those days used to keep their *petites maisons*. Every kind of display was her aversion; her greatest care was to make no noise. She was extremely desirous of being celebrated and of acquiring consideration in the world; but she wished it to be tranquil. Somewhat like that lunatic who thought himself made of glass, she shunned, like so many rocks, whatever could have exposed her to the shock of human passions. Hence her feebleness and timidity whenever courage was required to perform a good office. The man for whom she would willingly have opened her purse was not equally sure that her lips would open for him, and for this she found ingenious excuses. For instance, it was a maxim of hers, that whenever you hear anyone in company speak ill of your friend, you should never warmly undertake his defence and make head against the slanderer; for that was a sure way to irritate the serpent and make its poison more virulent. A man, she thought, ought to praise his friends with great moderation and on account of their good qualities, not of their actions; for when you say of anyone that he is sincere and beneficent, the rest may say to themselves, "we, too, are beneficent and sincere." "But," said she, "if you instance any proper behaviour, any virtuous action, then everyone who cannot say that he has done as much considers this praise as a reproach and seeks to undervalue it." The thing she valued most in a friend was an attentive prudence never to compromise her, as an instance of which she gave Bernard, a man whose actions and words were certainly a model of the coldest formality. "With him," said she, "I can be at my ease; nobody complains of him; I never have him to defend." This was a hint for more than one of our society, whose heads, like mine, were a little hot; and if anyone whom she loved was in danger or trouble from whatever cause, whether he was to blame or not, the first thing she did was to censure him; upon which I one day took the liberty of saying to her, perhaps too warmly, that her friends should be either infallible or always fortunate.

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[1] "These passions of soul and fierce contests may be quelled and calmed by sprinkling a little dust."

One of her foibles was a desire of interfering in the affairs of her friends—of being their confidant, guide, and adviser. Whoever admitted her into his secrets and allowed her to direct, and sometimes to scold him, was sure of gratifying her in the most sensible manner. But want of deference, however respectful, instantly cooled her. A man, it is true, who wished to conduct himself according to the rules of prudence could not do better than take her advice. The art of living in the world was her supreme science; her ideas upon every other subject were quite common and superficial; but, in the study of manners, in the knowledge of mankind, and particularly of the female sex, she was profoundly versed, and could give excellent lessons. If, therefore, a little self-love mingled with this desire of guiding and advising, there was also kindness, sincere friendship, and a wish to be useful.

Her understanding had received no other cultivation than that which is derived from intercourse with the world; yet it was acute, just, and penetrating. A natural taste and good sense enabled her in conversation to hit upon the word and form of expression that were suitable. She wrote with purity and simplicity, in a clear and concise style, but like a woman ill-educated, and who valued herself on being so. In a charming panegyric written upon her by your uncle, you may read of an Italian abbé who came and offered to dedicate to her an Italian and French grammar. "Dedicate a grammar to me, sir!" said she; "why, I do not so much as know orthography!" Nothing could be more true. Her real talent was that of telling a story well; in this she excelled, and readily employed it, without art or pretension, however, but just to set the rest an example; for no method by which she could render her society agreeable was ever neglected.

Of all this society, the gayest and liveliest, the man, too, whose gaiety was the most amusing was d'Alembert. After spending his morning in algebraical calculations, and in resolving problems of dynamics and astronomy, he issued from his lodgings like a scholar let loose from school, with no view but that of amusing himself; and this deep, solid and luminous mind took then so animated and diverting a turn that we quite forgot the philosopher and the learned man, and saw only the agreeable companion. This natural gaiety flowed from a pure mind, void of passion, satisfied with itself, and every day enjoying some new truth by which his labours were crowned. Such is the exclusive privilege of the exacter sciences, which no other kind of study can fully obtain.

From a similar cause arose the serenity of Mairan,[1] his sweet and smiling humour. Age had done for him what Nature had done for d'Alembert. It had moderated all the emotions of his soul, and the degree of warmth which it had left him was only the vivacity of Gascon wit, sedate and correct, of an original cast, and with an agreeable and delicate point. The philosopher of Beziers, indeed, was sometimes uneasy about what was going on in China; but when he got a letter with news of his friend Father Parennin his eyes sparkled with joy.

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[1] See note (5) at the end.

Oh! my children, what souls are those which feel no anxiety but about the motions of the ecliptic, or the manners and arts of the Chinese! No vice degrades, no regret withers, no passion saddens and torments them; they possess that liberty which is the companion of joy, and without which no gaiety was ever pure and lasting.

Marivaux,[1] too, would gladly have indulged in this sportive humour; but there was an occupation which engrossed his mind and clouded his face with perpetual anxiety. As his works had gained him the reputation of subtle and refined wit, he thought himself obliged to have this wit constantly, and was in a continual chase after ideas susceptible of opposition and which could be played off against each other. He allowed that such a thing was true to a certain degree, or in a certain point of view; but he always had some restriction, some distinction to make, which nobody had found out but himself. This close attention was laborious to himself, and often painful to others; but it produced often fortunate glimpses, and brilliant rays of light.

Yet the restlessness of his looks showed how anxious he was, both about his past and future success. Never, I believe, was there a more delicate, more easily hurt, or more timid self-love; but as he carefully avoided wounding that of others, his own was respected; and we only regretted that he could not prevail upon himself to be easy and natural.

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[1] See note (5) at the end.

The ideas of Chastellux[1] were never sufficiently clear, but he had a great many, and a very bright light penetrated often through the thin vapour spread over his thoughts. Of all the society, he possessed the most engaging character and the most amiable candour. Whether it was that he doubted the correctness of his own ideas and sought to ascertain them, or that he wished to clear them by discussion, he was fond of an argument, and willingly entered into it, but gracefully and in earnest; and as soon as truth shone before his eyes, whether it came from himself or from another, he was satisfied. No man ever employed his mind more fully in enjoying the wit of others. When he heard a *bon mot*, an ingenious sally, or a good story well told, he was delighted—you saw him in an ecstasy of pleasure; and the more brilliant the conversation became, the more animated were the countenance and eyes of Chastellux; the success of every other person flattered him as much as if it had been his own.

The Abbé Morellet[2] possessed a very rich magazine of knowledge, arranged with more order and clearness, and his conversation flowed, as it were, spontaneously, from a source of sound, pure, and profound ideas, which never dried up, yet never overflowed. At our dinners he displayed an open disposition, a correct and steady understanding, and a heart equally sound and upright. One of his talents, and that by which he was most distinguished, was a vein of delicate irony, which, before him, was a secret possessed by Swift alone. With all this power of being satirical had he chosen, no man was ever less so; and if he sometimes indulged in personal raillery, it was only a whip which he took into his hand to punish insolence or malignity.

The politeness of St. Lambert[3] was delicate, though a little cold; and his conversation showed the same acute and delicate turn of mind which we discover in his writings. Though not naturally gay, he became animated by the gaiety of others, and in a philosophical or literary conversation no one talked with sounder judgment or more exquisite taste. This taste had been formed at the little court of Lunéville, in which he formerly lived, and whose tone he still retained.

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[1] See note (17) at the end.

[2] See note (18) at the end.

[3] See note (19) at the end.

Helvetius, wholly engrossed by his ambition for literary celebrity, came to us with his brain still smoking from his morning labour. Being desirous of writing a book which should be distinguished in his day, his first care had been to find out either some new truth which he might bring to light, or some daring and original thought which he might support. Now as, for these two thousand years, new and important truths have been exceedingly rare, he had resolved to maintain the paradox which is unfolded in his book, "De l'Esprit." And whether it was, that after a severe struggle, he had persuaded himself of what he wished to make others believe, or that he was still contending with his own doubts and anxiously seeking to get the better of them, we were amused with seeing him successively bring on the carpet the questions which interested, or the difficulties which troubled his mind. After having allowed him for some time the pleasure of hearing them discussed, we prevailed upon him to let himself be carried along by the current of our conversations. He then yielded to them completely and fully, and was in this familiar intercourse as easy, as natural, as unaffectedly sincere, as in his writings he appears systematical and sophistical. Nothing could less resemble the ingenuity of his character and habits of life than the studied and factitious singularity of his writings; a dissimilarity which will always be found between the conduct and opinions of those who weary themselves out in thinking strange things. The soul of Helvetius was the very reverse of his own description. There could not be a better man; liberal, generous without ostentation, and beneficent from the goodness of his heart, he took it into his head to raise a calumny against all worthy men, and himself among the rest, and would allow virtuous actions to have no other motive but self-interest; however, we distinguished between the man and his books, and loved him such as he was, and you will see how agreeable his house became for literary men.

Thomas was a man still more passionate than he for glory, but he was more in unison with himself and expected success only from the singular powers which he displayed in expressing his sentiments and ideas, and from that high eloquence which was sure of bestowing originality on common subjects, and of throwing new light and new splendour upon truths already known. Absorbed, indeed, in his meditations, perpetually engrossed with the means of acquiring an extensive renown, he neglected the trifling attentions and the humble merit of being agreeable in company. The gravity of his character was mild, but reserved and silent; he rarely smiled at the gaiety of conversation, never promoted it. He seldom spoke freely, even on subjects that were suited to him, unless in a small and intimate circle; there, only, it was that his conversation dazzled by its lustre and astonished by its copiousness. At dinner, he did little more than increase our number, and our regard for him was solely derived from the consideration of his literary merit and his moral qualities. Thomas devoted himself always to virtue, to truth, to glory, but never to the Graces; and he lived in an age when, without the assistance and the favour of the Graces, there could be no brilliant reputation in literature.

Having mentioned the Graces, I must speak of one who possessed all their gifts in thought and expression, and was the only lady admitted by Madame Geoffrin to her literary dinner; this was Mademoiselle Lespinasse, the fair friend of d'Alembert. In her was a surprising union of propriety, of judgment, of prudence, with the liveliest fancy, the most ardent soul, the most inflammable imagination, which has existed since the days of Sappho. The fire which circulated through her veins and her nerves, and which rendered her mind so active, so brilliant, so charming, consumed her prematurely. I shall mention hereafter the regret we felt at her loss. Here I notice only the place she held at our dinners, to which her presence gave an inexpressible interest. Whether listening or speaking (and no one spoke better) she was the object of our constant attention; with no coquetry, she inspired us with an innocent desire of pleasing her; with no prudery, she let us see how far we might carry the freedom of conversation, without transgressing the bounds of propriety.

I have no intention to describe the whole circle of our guests. There were some idlers, who did little more than enjoy; well-informed men too, but who were covetous of their riches, and came to reap without the trouble of sowing. This number did not certainly include the Abbé Raynal; for, in the use which he made of his copious fund of information, if he ran sometimes into any excess, it was not an excess of economy. The robust vigour of his philosophy was not yet displayed; the vast mass of his knowledge was not completely formed; sagacity, correctness, precision, were still the prominent qualities of his understanding, to which he added a goodness of heart and a mildness of manner which endeared him to us all. Yet the readiness of his elocution and the copiousness of his memory appeared to us not sufficiently tempered. What he said could rarely be formed into dialogue; nor was it till old age had rendered his ideas less lively and abundant, that he became acquainted with the pleasures of conversation.

I know not whether it formed part of Madame Geoffrin's plan to draw into her society the most distinguished foreigners who came to Paris, and by that means to render her house celebrated throughout all Europe, or whether this was the natural consequence of her house being embellished and rendered agreeable by the society of men of letters; certain it is, that when a prince, a minister, a man or woman of note, arrived from a foreign country, they went to call upon Madame Geoffrin, were ambitious of being invited to one of our dinners, and took great pleasure in seeing us assembled at table. It was particularly on these days that Madame Geoffrin displayed all the charms of her wit, and said, "let us make ourselves agreeable." Accordingly, these dinners seldom failed to be enlivened by agreeable sallies.

Among such of these foreigners as took up their residence, or made any long stay at Paris, she selected the best informed and the most agreeable, and admitted them into the number of her guests. I shall particularly mention three, who, in the endowments of wit and knowledge, were inferior to none even of the most cultivated among Frenchmen; these were the Abbé Galiani, the Marquis de Caraccioli, since Ambassador from Naples, and the Count de Creutz, the Swedish Minister.

The Abbé Galiani was, in his person, the prettiest little harlequin that Italy ever produced; but, on the shoulders of this harlequin was the head of a Machiavel. He was an epicurean philosopher; his disposition was satirical, and he had considered everything from a ridiculous point of view; so that there was nothing, either in politics or morals, about which he had not some diverting story to tell; and these stories were always properly introduced and enlivened by some unforeseen and ingenious allusion. Conceive, along with this, the most unaffected elegance in his manner of speaking and in his gesticulation, and you may imagine the pleasure afforded to us by the contrast between the profound sense which the story contained and the ludicrous air of the person who told it. I do not exaggerate when

I say that we forgot everything and listened to him, sometimes for whole hours. But when he had acted his part he no longer formed any part of the company; he sat dull and silent in a corner, and seemed impatiently to expect the watchword to return on the stage. In his arguments, as in his stories, there was a necessity for hearing him out. If he were interrupted at any time—"Just let me conclude," said he, "and you will soon have full time to answer." Then, after drawing a long circle of inductions (for such was his practice), if any one attempted to reply, you saw him mix with the crowd and quietly make his escape.

The countenance of Caraccioli, when you first looked at it, had a thick and heavy air, with which stupidity might be painted. In order to animate his eyes and lighten his features, it was necessary for him to speak. But then, in proportion as that lively, penetrating, and luminous intelligence with which he was gifted, awoke, sparks of light, as it were, were seen flying out. His acuteness, gaiety and originality of thought, his easy expression, his graceful smiles, his feeling look, then united in bestowing on ugliness itself an agreeable and interesting character. He spoke our language ill, and with difficulty; but he was eloquent in his own; and when he was at a loss for a French word or idiom, he borrowed it from the Italian. Thus he was every moment enriching his language with a thousand bold and picturesque expressions which excited our envy. He accompanied them also, like the Abbé Galiani, with those Neapolitan gestures which gave such animation to his words, as to make it be said of both, that they had wit to their very fingers' ends. Both had excellent stories, almost all of which contained a profound moral import. Caraccioli had studied men philosophically; but he had observed them rather as a politician and a statesman than as a satirical moralist. He had viewed on a great scale the manners and government of nations;

and if he mentioned any particular features, it was only by way of example, in support of the inferences which he had been led to form.

Besides his inexhaustible stores of knowledge, and the easy and agreeable manner in which he communicated it, we esteemed him also as being an excellent man. Not one of us would have thought of making the Abbé Galiani his friend, but each was ambitious of the friendship of Caraccioli. I enjoyed it for a long time, and cannot well express how desirable it was.

But one of the men who loved me most and for whom I entertained the most tender affection, was the Count de Creutz. He, too, was attached to the literary society of Madame Geoffrin; he was less eager to please, less anxious to draw attention, often thoughtful and often absent, but the most charming of all our guests when he opened himself to us without reserve. On him nature had bestowed, in the highest degree, sensibility, warmth, delicacy of taste and of moral feeling, the love of what is beautiful in every department and the enthusiasm of genius as well as of virtue. She had granted him the power of expressing and of painting in glowing colours every object which had struck his imagination or strongly affected his soul; never man was born a poet if he were not. He was still young, yet his mind was enriched with a vast extent of information; he spoke the French as well as ourselves, and almost all the languages of Europe as well as his own, without reckoning the learned languages; he was conversant in every branch of ancient and modern literature; talked of chemistry as a chemist; of natural history as a disciple of Linnæus; and particularly of Sweden and Spain, as a curious observer of the properties and various productions of these climates; so that he supplied us with a source of instruction, embellished with the most brilliant eloquence.

From what I have said you must perceive how interesting and delightful this rendezvous of literary men must have been. For my part, I kept my ground, taking care to be neither too bold nor too timid, but gay, easy, and even a little free. I had the good wishes of the whole society and the friendship of those whom I most esteemed and loved. With regard to Madame Geoffrin, though I lodged in her house, I did not hold the first rank in her favour; not but that she was very well pleased with my enlivening, as I pretty often did, our dinners and conversations, either by little stories, or by sallies of humour which I suited to her taste, but in my private conduct I was not sufficiently complaisant in consulting her and in following the advice she gave me, while she, on her side, was rather doubtful of my prudence, and was always afraid of my occasioning her some of those vexations which she occasionally suffered from the imprudence of her friends. To me, therefore, she behaved with an anxious and doubtful kindness; while, in my behaviour to her, I maintained a certain degree of reserve, and though I attempted to be agreeable, would not allow myself to be governed.

However, she saw me succeed with all her society, and at her Monday's dinner I was no less welcome than at the meeting of men of letters. The artists were fond of me, because I was at once curious and docile, and spoke to them constantly of what they knew better than I. I forgot to mention that below my apartments at Versailles, was a hall containing the pictures which were successively employed to embellish the palace, and which were almost always the productions of the great masters. I used, by way of amusement, to make it my morning walk; there I spent whole hours with honest Portail, the worthy guardian of these treasures, talking to him about the genius and the manner of the different Italian schools, and upon the distinctive character of the great painters. In my walk through the gardens I had also formed some comparative ideas of ancient and modern sculpture. These preliminary studies had qualified me to converse with our guests; I allowed them the advantage and amusement of instructing me, and they liked me for the pleasure with which I listened and received their lessons. I took care not to display before them any other literary information except such as concerned the fine arts. I had no difficulty in perceiving that, whatever might be their natural capacity, they were almost all deficient in knowledge and cultivation. Honest Carle-Vanloo possessed in a high degree, every talent which a painter can possess, genius excepted; but he wanted inspiration, and had made few attempts to supply this want by those studies which exalt the soul and which fill the imagination with great and lofty ideas. Vernet was admirable in the art of painting water, air, light, and the action of these elements; he had every model of these compositions full in his mind; beyond that he was gay enough, but quite a common man. Soufflot was a man of sense, very judicious in his conduct, a knowing and skilful architect, but his ideas were bounded by the circumference of his compass. Boucher's imagination possessed fire, but little correctness, and still less dignity; he had not taken a good place for observing the Graces; he painted Venus and the Virgin from the nymphs behind the scenes, and his language, as well as his pictures, partook of the character of his models and the style of his workshop. The sculptor Lemoine was interesting from the modest simplicity with which his genius was accompanied, but he spoke little even on the art of which he was so thoroughly master; he scarcely answered to the praises that were given him: an affecting degree of timidity in a man whose look was all mind and soul. Latour possessed enthusiasm, and employed it in painting the philosophers of the day. But having confused his brain with politics and morals, and thinking himself able to talk learnedly on these subjects, he thought himself humbled when you talked to him of painting. You, my children, have a specimen of his powers in my portrait; it was a reward for the complaisance with which I listened to him regulating the destinies of Europe. With the others, I informed myself about what related to their art; and thus these dinners with artists afforded me a good deal both of pleasure and advantage.

Among the amateurs who were present at these dinners, some were possessed of a good deal of knowledge, and with them I found no difficulty in varying the conversation and reviving it when it was likely to languish, and they seemed very well satisfied with my mode of talking to them. One man alone showed me no kind of good-will, and his cold politeness indicated aversion; this was the Count de Caylus.[1]

I cannot say which of the two had got the start of the other, but scarcely had I known the character of the man, when I conceived as much aversion for him as he had for me. I never took the trouble to examine what it was that had displeased him in me, but I knew very well what I disliked in him. It was the importance which he assumed on account of the meanest and most trifling of talents; the value which he attached to his minute researches and antique gewgaws; the kind of dominion which he had usurped over the artists, and of which he made a bad use by favouring men of middling talents who paid court to him, and by depressing those who, being more confident in their own strength, would not deign to solicit his support. In short, it was a refined and skilful vanity, a fierce and domineering pride, which he was skilful enough to conceal under a rude and simple appearance. Supple and attentive towards men in power, on whom the artists depended, he acquired with the former a credit, the influence of which was dreaded by the latter. He accosted learned men, and got them to compose memoirs upon the toys which were sold to him by his broker; he made a magnificent collection of these trifles, which he held forth as antiques; he proposed prizes upon Isis and Osiris, that he himself might seem to be initiated into their mysteries, and by this false show of erudition he crept into the academies, though he knew neither Greek nor Latin. He had so often said, and so often got his panegyrists to say, that in architecture he was the restorer of the simple style, of simple forms, of simple beauty, that the ignorant believed it, and through his connections with the *dilettanti*, he passed himself off in Italy and in all Europe, as the inspirer of the fine arts. For him, therefore, I felt that kind of natural antipathy which plain and honest men have always for impostors.

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[1] See note (20) at the end.

After dining at Madame Geoffrin's with literary men or with artists, I spent the evening with her in a more intimate society, for she had also done me the favour of admitting me to her private supper parties. The feast was but small; commonly there was just a chicken and spinach, with an omelet. The company was small, too, and consisted at most of five or six particular friends, or three or four men and women of the highest fashion, suited to each other's taste, and all of whom were pleased to be together. But of whatever persons this small circle of guests consisted, Bernard and I were always in the number. There was only one from which Bernard was excluded and I only admitted. The group consisted of three ladies and one man. The three ladies, who resembled a good deal the three goddesses of Mount Ida, were the beautiful Countess of Brionne, the beautiful Marchioness de Duras, and the handsome Countess d'Egmont. Their Paris was Prince Louis de Rohan. But I suspect that at this time he gave the apple to Minerva, for the lively and seducing d'Egmont appeared to me the Venus of the supper. She was the daughter of Marshal Richelieu, and had the vivacity, the wit and the graces of her father. She was also said to have his roving and libertine humour; but of this neither Madame Geoffrin nor I chose to appear conscious. The young Marchioness de Duras was as modest as Madame d'Egmont was lively, and her dignified severity, with a style of beauty in which there was nothing elegant nor winning, suggested the idea of Juno. As to the Countess de Brionne, she would have been Venus herself, had it been sufficient to possess the most elegant form, the most perfect regularity of features, and to unite everything which a man could conceive in order to describe or paint ideal beauty. Of all charms, she wanted one only, without which there can be no Venus in the world, and which rendered Madame d'Egmont so captivating; this was the air of voluptuousness. As to the Prince de Rohan, he was young, brisk, wild, good-humoured, haughty occasionally when he met with men whose dignity rivalled his own, but gaily familiar with men of letters who, like me, were easy and simple.

At these private suppers my vanity, as you may well suppose, excited me to use every means which I possessed of being agreeable and amusing. The new tales which I was then writing were first read before these ladies, and they amused themselves, either before or after supper, with hearing them read. They appointed meetings for this purpose; and when, from any accident, the private supper was not held, they met at dinner at Madame de Brionne's. I must confess myself never to have been more sensibly flattered by any success than by that which my reading met with in this little circle, where I was judged, or rather applauded, by wit, taste, beauty, and all the Graces united. Neither in my descriptions, nor in my dialogue, was there a stroke at all delicate or refined which was not strongly felt, and the pleasure I caused resembled transport. I myself was transported to see, close by me, the finest eyes in the world shedding tears at those little affecting scenes in which I painted the sufferings of Nature or Love. But notwithstanding their extreme politeness, I clearly perceived, too, the cold and feeble passages which were passed over in silence and those in which I had missed the proper word, the language of Nature, the precise shade of truth; and all this I marked to be corrected at leisure.

From the idea which I have given of Madame Geoffrin's society, you will doubtless suppose that it might have supplied the place of every other. But I had old and worthy friends in Paris, who were very glad to see me, and with whom I was myself very happy to meet. Madame Harenc, Madame Desfourniels, Mademoiselle Clairon, and, in particular, Madame d'Herouville, had a right to share my most agreeable moments. I had found, also, some new friends, whose society was charming. The intendants of the *Menus Plaisirs* were not neglected.

I had observed, besides, that it was necessary for a man, who wished to acquire his true value in Madame Geoffrin's eyes, to preserve a certain medium between negligence and assiduity, to leave no room for her either to complain of the one, or be tired of the other, not to be deficient in the attentions which he paid her, but also not to be too lavish. Too eager attention oppressed her. Even of the most agreeable society she wished to take only what suited her at her own time and convenience. I, therefore, imperceptibly secured the advantage of being able to make some sacrifices to her, and, talking of the life which I led in the world, I gave her, without affectation, to understand that the time I was with her might have been spent very agreeably elsewhere. Accordingly, for the space of ten years, during which I lodged in her house, though I never inspired her with a very tender friendship, I never lost her esteem and kindness, and until she was seized with her paralytic stroke, I never ceased to be one of those literary men whom she entertained and befriended.

Yet, to conceal nothing, Madame Geoffrin's society wanted one of the pleasures on which I set the greatest value, and that was freedom of thought. With her mild "Well said, indeed," she kept our minds always, as it were, in leading strings; and I partook of dinners elsewhere, where we were more at our ease.

The freest, or rather the most licentious of all, was that given by a wealthy farmer-general, of the name of Pelletier, to eight or ten bachelors, who were all fond of gaiety. At this dinner the wildest heads were Collé and Crebillon the younger. They were constantly playing upon each other in the most entertaining manner; and he who would entered the lists. There never was any personal satire; literary vanity was alone attacked, but it was not spared, and it was necessary to throw it off completely before engaging in the combat. Collé was brilliant beyond all expression; and his adversary Crebillon had a particular address in animating and exciting him. Sometimes, tired of being an idle spectator, I threw myself into the circle at my own risk, and received lessons of modesty that were a little severe. Sometimes, too, one Monticourt entered into the contest, an expert and delicate humourist, and what was then called a banterer of the first rank. But the literary vanity which he diverted himself with attacking gave us no hold on him; for, by acknowledging himself to be devoid of talents, he became invulnerable to criticism. I used to compare him to a cat, which, lying on its back with its paws in the air, shows nothing but claws. The rest of the company laughed at our contest, and this pleasure they were allowed to enjoy; but when gaiety ceased to be satirical, and laid aside the arms of criticism, everyone was eager to take his part. Bernard alone (for he, too, was present at these dinners) kept always aloof.

There is something very singular in the contrast between the character and reputation of Bernard. The nature of his poetry might, in his youth, have enabled him to deserve the appellation of *Gentil*, but he was not in the least *gentil* when I knew him. With women he had only an obsolete gallantry; and when he had said to one lady that she was as fresh as Hebe, or that she had the complexion of Flora, to another that she had the smile of the Graces, or the figure of the Nymphs, he had no more to say. I saw him at Choisy at the Festival of Roses, which he celebrated annually in a kind of small temple, decorated with opera-scenes, and adorned with so many garlands of roses that our heads were affected by them. This festival was a supper in which the ladies were imagined to be all the divinities of Spring. Bernard was the high-priest. This surely was for him the moment of inspiration, had he been at all susceptible of it—well, even there, no sally in the least animated, either of gaiety or of gallantry, ever escaped his lips; he was just coldly polite. With literary men, amid their most brilliant gaiety, he was still only polite, and in our serious and philosophical conversations, nothing could be more barren. He had but a superficial knowledge even of polite literature and knew only his Ovid. Being thus reduced almost to silence upon every subject which went beyond the sphere of his ideas, he never had an opinion of his own, and nobody could ever say what Bernard had thought upon any subject of the least consequence. He lived, if one may say so, on the reputation of his amatory poems, which he was prudent enough not to publish. We had foreseen their fate when they should be printed; we knew that they were frigid, a fault particularly unpardonable in a poem on the art of love; but his reserve, his modesty, his politeness, inspired us with so much good-will, that not one of us during the lifetime of Bernard ever disclosed the fatal secret. I return to the dinner where Collé displayed a character so different from that of Bernard.

Never was the genius of gaiety of so rich and constant a warmth; I cannot now say what it was we laughed at so much, but I know well that every sally of his made us laugh till the tears came into our eyes. Everything became humorous and diverting by passing through his brain when once it was heated. It is true he often sinned against decency, but at this dinner there was no excessive severity upon that head.

A very curious accident broke up this joyous society. Pelletier fell in love with an adventuress, who made him believe that she was daughter to Louis XV. Every Sunday she went to Versailles, under pretence of visiting her royal sisters, and she always came back with some little present—a ring, a case, a watch, or a box with a portrait of one of these ladies. Pelletier, who had wit, but a very weak understanding, believed all this, and in deep mystery married this gipsy. From that time you may well suppose that we could no longer find any pleasure in his house, and he himself, having soon after discovered his error, and the shameful folly of which he had been guilty, turned mad, and died at Charenton.

A more decent and more agreeable liberty, a gaiety not so wild, but yet abundantly lively, reigned at the suppers of Madame Filleul, where the young Countess de Seran shone in all the lustre of rising beauty and artless gaiety. At these suppers no one thought of aiming at wit; this was the least anxiety both of the landlady and her guests, and yet there was a great deal of the most natural and delicate kind. But before describing the pleasures of this society, I must mention one which soon after cost me too dear to escape from my memory. Listen, my children, to that chain of circumstances, accidentally combined, which led to one of the most remarkable events of my life.

In the society of Madame Filleul I again met with Cury; he was in misfortune, and I loved him the more tenderly. I formerly mentioned that he showed me much kindness during his prosperity; and very lately he had invited me to spend with him and his intimate friends some of the fine days at his country-house of Cheneviere, near Andresis, where he had accommodation for shooting. There, in view of a picturesque cottage, I had composed the tale of the "Shepherdess of the Alps." This was a happy moment of calm and serenity, soon followed by a violent storm. Every one hunted, except myself; but I observed the chase as it went on in an island of the Seine. Here I sat at the foot of a willow, and fancying myself on the Alps, I composed my tale and watched the dinner of the hunters. When they returned, the fresh and pure air of the river had supplied the place of exercise, and made my appetite as keen as theirs.

In the evening, a table, covered with the game which they had killed, and crowned with bottles of excellent wine, opened the field, as it were, to gaiety and freedom. These were the last caresses, the deceitful adieus, which faithless prosperity bestowed on Cury.

> "Hinc apicem rapax
> Fortuna cum stridore acuto
> Sustulit."[1]

He made the gentlemen of the bed-chamber his enemies by a little piece of gaiety in which he had indulged at the theatre of Fontainebleau, where, in a prologue, after his manner, he had turned them into ridicule. After pretending themselves to laugh at his humour, they revenged it by forcing him to quit his office of intendant of the *Menus Plaisirs*. Of these gentlemen, the most foolish, vain and passionate, was the Duke d'Aumont. He had been bent on the ruin of Cury, was the principal cause of it, and valued himself on being so. That alone would have given me an aversion to this pitiful duke. But I was personally injured by him in the following manner.

Madame de Pompadour had expressed a desire that the *Venceslaus*, of Rotrou, should be purified from that grossness of manners and language which deformed that tragedy; and, out of complaisance to her, I had agreed to undertake this ungrateful labour. The actors themselves had heard and approved my corrections; and the tragedy had been learnt by heart and rehearsed with these alterations for the purpose of being acted at Versailles. But Le Kain, who detested me for a reason I have mentioned elsewhere, after pretending to adopt the corrections of his character, had been so treacherous as, without my knowledge, to restore the old character exactly as it was, which had confused all the other actors, and produced every moment a failure in the replies of the dialogue, and in all the effect of the representation. I had loudly complained of this as an instance of unheard-of baseness and insolence; and finding myself committed in the disputes which this event excited among the actors, I was proceeding in the *Mercury* to inform the public of Le Kain's conduct, and give the lie to the reports which were circulated by his party, when the Duke d'Aumont, by whom it was favoured, had caused silence to be imposed upon me. I, too, therefore, had some reason not to like him.

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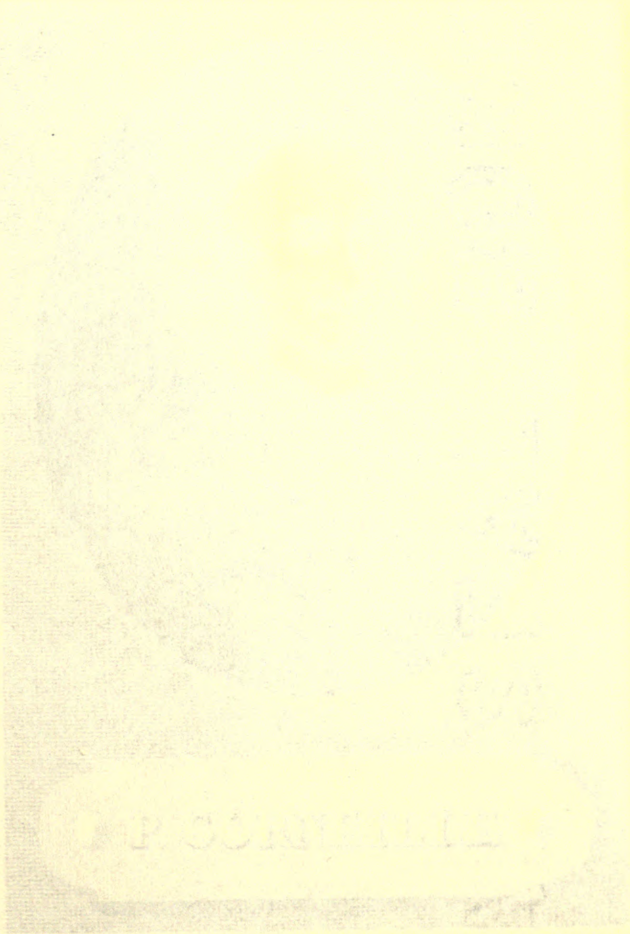
[1] "From one, greedy Fortune, with noisy flapping, bears away the crown."

Cury, notwithstanding his misfortune, had still kept up a friendly intercourse with his old companions in the *Menus Plaisirs*. One of them, with whom I was particularly intimate, Gagny, an amateur of painting and of French music, and one of the most faithful attendants at the opera, had taken for his mistress a girl who wished to act on that theatre; and he was desirous that she should make her appearance in the great characters of Lully, beginning with that of Oriana. He invited Curry, myself and some other *amateurs* to spend the Christmas holidays at his country-house at Garges, where we might hear the new Oriana, and give her a few lessons. You must observe that in this party of pleasure was Laferté, *intendant des Menus*, and the fair Rosetti, his mistress. Good entertainment, good wine and the kindness of our host made Mademoiselle Saint Hilaire's voice appear admirable. Gagny thought he heard Le Maure; and, after drinking some of his wine, we were all of his opinion.

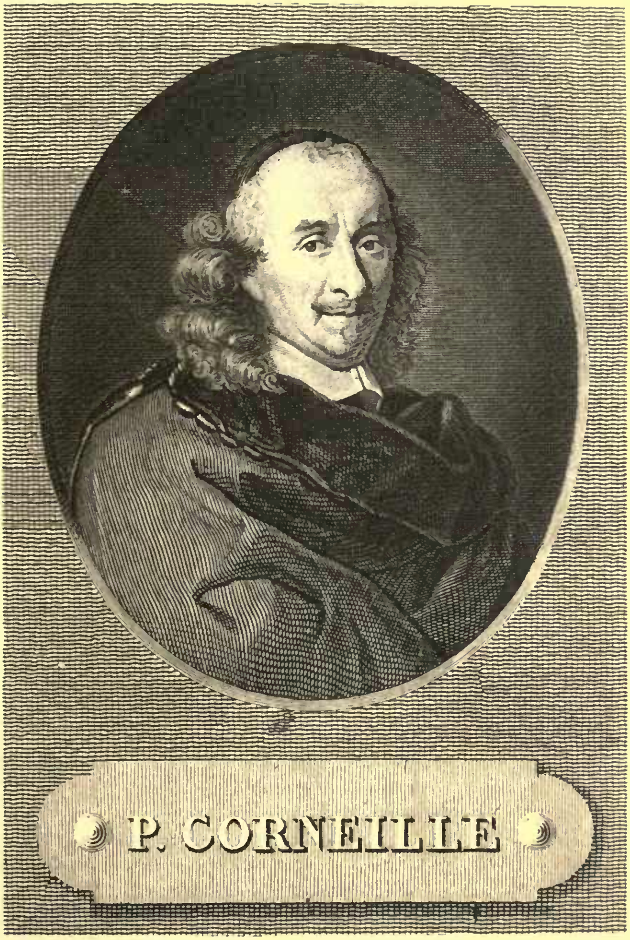
Everything was going on as well as possible, when one morning I learned that Cury was seized with a violent fit of the gout. I went immediately and called upon him. I found him by the fire-side, having both his legs covered with flannel; he was scrawling however on his knee, and laughing with the air of a Satyr, for he had all the features of that animal. I was going to talk to him of his fit of the gout; he made me a sign not to interrupt him, and with a crippled hand continued to write. I then said to him, "You have suffered a great deal, but your illness I see is abated." —"I am still in pain," said he, "but that does not hinder me from laughing. You shall laugh too. You know the rage with which the Duke d'Aumont has persecuted me. A little piece of satire will not, I think, be too severe a revenge; and here is one, which in spite of the gout I have composed to-night."

He had already written thirty lines of the famous parody of Cinna; he read them; and I must confess that, as they appeared to me very diverting, I urged him to go on. "Well," said he, "allow me to compose, for my genius inspires me." I left him, and did not come down till the sound of the dinner bell, when I found that he himself, wrapt in flannel, had hobbled down, and was reading to Laferté and Rosetti what he had read to me in the morning. He had now written some additional lines; and on hearing them read a second time, I easily got by heart the whole of these satirical verses, assisted by my perfect knowledge of those of Corneille, which they were intended to parody. Next day, Cury went on with his work, and always made me his confidant; so that, on my return to Paris,



P. CORNEILLE

P. CORNEILLE
ETCHED BY LALAUZE



P. CORNEILLE

I carried away about fifty lines well stored in my memory.

I am aware that, in its passage through the world, the ball has been increased, but this I think is all that came from the hand of Cury. I must add that in his lines there was not the least abuse; whereas I have seen some of the grossest in the numerous incorrect copies which have been taken.

Those who made these copies had got hold of the general idea of the parody, but almost all the particulars were altered and disfigured. There were even passages which, not being formed upon the lines of Corneille, had been absolutely forgotten by the copiers. For instance, in counterfeiting that manner of giving his opinion, which had procured for d'Argental the name of "Gobe-Mouche," they had strung together a number of unmeaning words; but these broken words contained no delicate strokes, not a feature of resemblance with the passage in the parody, where d'Argental thus pronounces his opinion:

"Oui, je serois d'avis . . . . cependant il me semble
Que l'on peut . . . . car enfin vous devez . . . . mais je tremble.
Ce n'est pas qu'après tout, comme vous sentez bien,
Je ne fusse tenté de ne menager rien ;
Mon froid enthousiasme est fait pour les extremes.
Mais les comediens, les poetes eux memes . . . .
Je ne sais que vous dire, et crois, en attendant,
Que le plus sur parti seroit le plus prudent.
C'est la seule raison qui fait que je balance,
Seigneur, et vous savez combien mon excellence
Delibere et consulte avant de decider.
Sans doute mieux que moi le Kain peut vous guider;
A sa subtilité je sais que rien n'echappe :
Il a pu vous convaincre, et moi-meme il me frappe.
Toute fois je pretends qu'il est de certains cas
Où souvent . . . . on croit voir ce qu'on ne voit pas.
Tel est mon sentiment, seigneur, je le hasarde
Jugez vous, c'est vous seul que l'affaire regarde."[1]

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[1] "Yes, I should think . . . . yet it appears to me that one may . . . . for, in short, you ought . . . . but I tremble. Not that

This was the very style and manner of Cury's raillery. All his acquaintances knew it as well as myself. When the Duke d'Aumont said to his confidants:

> "Et par vos seuls avis je serai cet hiver
> Ou directeur de troupe, ou simple duc et pair."[1]

When he replied to d'Argental in admiration of his eloquence:

> "Vous ne savez que dire! ah! c'est en dire assez.
> Vous en dites toujours plus que vous ne pensez."[2]

I cannot conceive how those who were every day hearing Cury's jests did not recognise his delicate irony. In his youth, this turn of mind displayed itself on a remarkable and well-known occasion.

His mother was intimately acquainted with M. Poultier, intendant of Lyons. One day when she and her son were at a grand dinner at his house, the latter, sitting by the intendant's lady, and the mother by the intendant himself, M. Poultier had drawn the eyes of the company upon a snuff-box of his, which had not

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after all, as you may suppose, I did not feel a temptation to throw off all reserve; my cool enthusiasm naturally leads to extremes. But the actors, the poets themselves . . . I know not what to say, but I think, in the meantime, that the surest line of conduct would be the most prudent. This, sir, is the only reason which makes me hesitate; and you know how long My Excellence deliberates and consults before determining. Doubtless Le Kain will be a better guide than I; he may have convinced you, and he has struck myself. Nevertheless, I insist, that there are certain occasions when a man thinks he sees what he does not see. Such, sir, is my opinion; I will venture to express it. Do you judge; the affair concerns you alone."

[1] "Your opinion alone shall decide whether I shall this winter be the manager of a stage, or merely a duke and peer."

[2] "You know not what to say! Indeed, that is saying enough. You say always more than you think."

yet been seen, and said that it was a present from one who was very dear to him.

> "Madame, est-ce la votre, ou celle de ma mere?"[1]

asked young Cury, addressing himself to the intendant's lady. One of the guests, wishing to display his erudition, observed that this verse was from Rodogune. "No," replied M. Poultier, "it is from *l'Etourdi*." There was a great deal of wit in this mode of checking a piece of folly and impertinence.

This sally, and a number of others, had rendered Cury celebrated for his power of delicate allusion. Luckily, it was forgotten.

I arrived at Paris, and went to Madame Geoffrin's, full of the parody which he had communicated to me; and on the following day, I heard this curious piece talked of. Only the two first lines were quoted—

> "Que chacun se retire, et qu'aucun n'entre ici;
> Vous, le Kain, demeurez; vous, d'Argental, aussi."[2]

—but this was enough to make me believe that it was in general circulation, and, smiling, I unguardedly said, "What! do you know no more than this?" Presently I am urged to repeat all I know. They assured me there were none there but men of honour, on whom I could depend; and Madame Geoffrin herself answered for the discretion of this little circle of friends. I yielded; I repeated to them what I knew of the parody; and next day I was denounced to the Duke d'Aumont, and by him to the King, as the author of this satire.

I was sitting quietly at the opera, hearing our Oriana at the rehearsal of *Amadis*, when I was told that all Versailles was on fire against me; that I was accused of being the author of a satire against the Duke d'Aumont; that the high nobility were calling out for vengeance, and that the Duke de Choiseul was at the head of my enemies.

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[1] "Madam, is it from you, or is it from my mother?"

[2] "Let every person withdraw, and let no one be admitted. Le Kain, do you stay; and you also, d'Argental."

I returned home immediately, and wrote to the Duke d'Aumont, assuring him that I was not the author of the verses ascribed to me, and that, never having written a satire against anyone, I would not have begun with him. I ought to have stopped here. But, as I wrote on, it occurred to my recollection that on the subject of *Venceslaus*, and of the lies published against me, the Duke d'Aumont had himself written to me that I ought to despise such things, and that they sank of themselves into oblivion when nothing was done to buoy them up. It appeared just and natural to repay him with his own maxim, which was very foolish in me. Accordingly, my letter was considered as a new insult, and the Duke d'Aumont showed it to the King as a proof of the resentment which had dictated my satire. To throw ridicule upon him in my very disavowal amounted nearly to an acknowledgment of guilt. My letter, therefore, only added new fuel to his rage, and that of the whole Court. I failed not to go to Versailles, and on my arrival wrote to the Duke de Choiseul:

> "MY LORD,—I am told that you lend an ear to the report which accuses and tends to ruin me. You are powerful, but you are just; I am unfortunate, but I am innocent. I beseech you to listen and judge me.
>
> I am," &c.

The Duke de Choiseul, in reply, wrote at the foot of my letter, "In half-an-hour," and returned it to me. In half-an-hour I went to his hotel, and was introduced.

"You wish me to hear you," said he, "and I agree. What have you to say?" "That I have done nothing, my lord duke, which deserves the severe reception I meet with from you, whose soul is noble and feeling, and who never took pleasure in humbling the unhappy." "But, Marmontel, how would you have me receive you, after the very blamable satire which you have composed against the Duke d'Aumont?" "I did not compose that satire; I wrote to himself to that effect." "Yet, in your letter, you have offered a new insult, by retorting, in his own language, the advice he had given you." "As this advice was prudent, I thought there could be no harm in calling it to his recollection. I meant no ill." "Yet, allow me to say you have committed a piece of impertinence." "I was sensible of it after my letter went off." "He is very much irritated, and with good reason." "Yes, here I was wrong, and I reproach myself as guilty of a breach of propriety. But, my lord, can you consider this as a crime?" "No; but the parody?" "I assure you as an honest man that the parody is not mine." "But are not you the person who repeated it?" "Yes, that part which I knew, in a society where everyone says all he knows; but I allowed no copies to be taken, though there were some who would gladly have written it out." "Yet it is in circulation." "It must have been got from somebody else?" "Well, from whom did you get it?" (I kept silent.) "You," continued he, "are said to have been the first who repeated it, and repeated it in a manner which discovered you to be the author." "When I repeated that part which I knew," replied I, "it was already talked of, and the first lines were quoted. As to the manner in which I repeated it, this would equally prove me to have written the 'Misanthrope,' the 'Tartuffe' and 'Cinna' itself, for I value myself, my lord duke, upon reading all these as if I were the author." "But, after all, from whom did you get the parody? You must tell that." "Forgive me, my lord duke, that I must not and will not tell." "I am certain it must have been from the author." "Well, my lord duke, if it were from the author, ought I to give his name?" "But how otherwise would you have us believe that it is not yours? All appearances are against you.

You cherished resentment against the Duke d'Aumont, the cause is well known; you were desirous of revenge. You wrote this satire, and, as it appeared diverting, you repeated it; this is what people say, what they believe, and what they have a right to believe. What do you say in answer to this?" "I say that this would be the conduct of a fool, of an idiot, of a man as weak as he was wicked, and that none of these characters belong to the author of the parody. What! my lord duke, could the man who had written it have been so imprudent, so stupidly blind, as to go himself and repeat it in a public company? No! he would, in a disguised hand, have written out twelve copies and have sent them to the actors, to the guards, to discontented authors. I know as well as another this mode of keeping secrecy, and had I been guilty I would have employed it to conceal myself. Just say then to yourself: 'Marmontel, in the presence of ten persons, who were not his intimate friends, has repeated what he knew of this parody, therefore he is not the author. His letter to the Duke d'Aumont is that of a man who fears nothing; therefore, he felt himself strong in his innocence, and thought he had nothing to fear.' This reasoning, my lord duke, is the reverse of that which is held by my opponents, but it is not the less conclusive. I have done two imprudent things; one is, repeating verses which my memory had caught, and that without the consent of the author." "It was by the author, then, that you heard them repeated?" "Yes, by the author himself, for I will not deceive you. I have, therefore, failed in my duty to him, which is my first fault; the other consisted in writing to the Duke d'Aumont in a manner which had an ironical and disrespectful appearance. I own myself to have been wrong in these two particulars, but in no others." "I believe it," said he, "you speak like an honest man; however, you must go to the Bastille. Call on M. de Saint Florentin; he has received the order from the King."

"I go," said I, "but may I hope that you will no longer be among the number of my enemies?" He promised this with a good grace, and I went to call on the minister who was to expedite my *lettre de cachet.*

He was well disposed towards me and easily believed my innocence. "But what can be done," said he; "the Duke d'Aumont accuses you and insists on your being punished? He asks this favour in return for his own services and those of his ancestors. The King has chosen to grant it. Go to M. de Sartine; I sent him the King's order. You will tell him that you come for it at my desire." I asked if I could first be allowed time to dine at Paris. He granted me permission.

I was invited to dine this day with my neighbour, M. de Vaudesir, a prudent and intelligent man, who, though his appearance was rather forbidding, possessed exquisite taste in literature, with very polite and amiable manners. Alas! his only son was the wretched Saint James, who, after madly squandering a large fortune that had been left him, died a bankrupt in that Bastille to which I was now sent.

After dinner, I acquainted Vaudesir with my adventure, and we took a tender leave of each other. I then went to M. de Sartine, but did not find him at home; he was dining that day in the city, and was not expected till six. It was five; I spent the interval in calling on my good friend, Madame Harenc, informing her of my misfortune, and soothing her anxiety. At six I returned to the minister of police. He either knew not, or pretended not to know my affair; I gave him an account of it, and he expressed regret. "When we dined together," said he, "with the Baron d'Holbach, who would have thought that the first time I should meet you again would be to send you to the Bastille? But I have not got the order. Let me see if it has come to the office in my absence. He sent for his clerks, and, on their declaring that they had heard nothing of it, "Go," said he, "sleep at home; and if you return to-morrow at ten, it will do just as well.'

I had need of this evening to arrange the *Mercury* for the month. I therefore sent and begged two of my friends to sup with me, and, in the meantime, called on Madame Geoffrin, and informed her of my disgrace. She had heard something of it already, for I found her cold and sad ; but though my misfortune took its rise in her society, and though she herself was the involuntary cause, I took no notice of that circumstance; with which, I believe, she was very well pleased.

The two friends whom I expected were Suard and Coste; the former was a young Toulousan, with whom I had become acquainted in that city; the other was, and I trusted would continue for life to be, the chosen friend of my heart. He was pleased to cherish this agreeable illusion by frankly presenting me with opportunities of being useful to him. I should have been offended had he appeared to question the full right which he had to command my services. A desire of employing them usefully for themselves had led me to undertake a collection of the most curious articles in the old *Mercuries.* They amused themselves with making the selection, and a hundred and twenty guineas, the produce of this part of my domain, were divided between them.

We spent part of the night together in making all the preparations for printing the next *Mercury*, and after having slept a few hours, I arose, packed up my clothes and went to M. de Sartine's, where I found the officer who was to accompany me. M. de Sartine proposed that this person should go to the Bastille in a different carriage from mine. But I chose to decline this obliging offer, and my conductor and I arrived at the Bastille in the same carriage. I was received in the council-chamber by the governor and his staff-officers; and there I began to perceive that I had been well recommended. The governor, M. Abadie, after reading the letters that were given him by the officer, said that if I chose I might retain my servant; on condition, however, that we should lodge in the same room and that he should not leave the prison before me. This domestic was Bury. I consulted him on the subject; he answered that he would not leave me. My clothes and books were slightly examined, and I was taken up to a very large room, the furniture of which consisted of two beds, two tables, a chest of drawers and three chairs of straw. It was cold; but a jailer kindled a good fire and brought plenty of wood. At the same time, I was supplied with pens, ink and paper, on condition that I should give an account both of the number of sheets I received and of the manner in which they were employed.

Whilst I was arranging my table, before sitting down to write, the jailer returned and asked if I was satisfied with my bed. After examining it, I answered that the mattresses were bad and the blankets dirty. These were all changed in a minute. I was also asked at what hour I would choose to dine. I answered, "at the common hour." There was a library in the Bastille, and the governor sent me the catalogue and desired me to make my choice out of the books which it contained. I merely thanked him for myself, but my servant asked for Prevost's novels, which were brought him.

I had in my possession sufficient means of warding off *ennui*. I had been long fretted at the contempt which literary men expressed for the poem of Lucan, which they had not read, and knew only by the barbarous and bombastical version of Brebuf. I had resolved to make a more decent and correct translation into prose; and as this task would employ my mind, without fatiguing it, it appeared the most suitable for the solitary leisure of my prison. I had, therefore, brought the "Pharsalia" with me; and, with a view of understanding it better, I had taken care to add the "Commentaries" of Cæsar.

Here then was I, by the side of a good fire, revolving the quarrel of Cæsar and Pompey, and forgetting my own with the Duke d'Aumont. Bury, on the other hand, was as much of a philosopher as myself, and amused himself with making our beds, which were placed in the two opposite corners of my room. Notwithstanding two strong bars placed on the window, we were then enlightened by a fine winter day, and had a view of the suburbs of St. Antony. Two hours after, I was drawn from this deep reverie by the noise made in undrawing the bolts from the two doors which enclosed me; and a couple of jailers, loaded with a dinner, which I supposed to be mine, came in and set it down, without saying a word. One placed before the fire three little plates, covered with dishes of common earthenware; another spread upon the table a cloth, which, though somewhat coarse, was white. The table was then very neatly covered with pewter fork and spoon, good household bread, and a bottle of wine. Having performed their office, the jailers retired, and the two gates were shut with the same noise of locks and bolts. Bury then invited me to sit down to table, and served me with soup. It was Friday; the herb soup was made of white beans and fresh butter, and a dish of the same beans was the first which Bury served. All this was very good. Still better was the cod which he brought for my second course. A little seasoning of garlic gave it a delicacy of taste and odour which might have gratified the palate of the most dainty Gascon. The wine, though not excellent, was tolerable. There was no dessert; one could not but expect to want something. Upon the whole, it appeared to me that a man dined very well in prison.

As I was rising from table, and as Bury was going to sit down (for there still remained enough for his dinner), my two jailers again appeared, with pyramids of new plates in their hands. The appearance of fine linen, beautiful earthenware, silver fork and spoon, showed us our mistake; but we said nothing; and when the jailers, after setting it all down, had withdrawn, Bury said, "Sir, you have eaten my dinner; allow me, if you please, to eat yours." "It is quite fair you should," replied I; and the walls of my room were, I believe, much surprised to echo a laugh.

This dinner was rich, consisting of the following dishes: an excellent soup, a slice of juicy beef, the leg of a boiled capon swimming in gravy, a small dish of artichokes fried in marinade, a dish of spinach, a very fine Cresanne pear, fresh grapes, a bottle of old Burgundy and some of the best Mocha coffee. Such was Bury's dinner, with the exception of the coffee and fruit, which he made a point of reserving for me.

After dinner, the governor called upon me, and asked if I had found my dinner good, assuring me that it should be from his own table; that he himself would take care to cut every slice, and that no other person should touch them. He proposed a chicken for supper; I returned thanks, but said that the fruit which remained from dinner would suffice. You have seen what was my ordinary fare at the Bastille, and may infer from it how mildly, or rather how reluctantly, they submitted to become subservient to the rage of the Duke d'Aumont.

I daily received a visit from the governor. As he had some knowledge of *belles lettres*, and even of Latin, he took pleasure in observing the progress of my composition; he enjoyed it. But he soon broke off from these little amusements, and said, "Adieu; I must go and comfort those who are more unhappy than you." It was very possible that the attentions which he paid to me might not be a proof of his humanity; but of his possessing that virtue, I had certain evidence from other quarters. One of the jailers had formed a friendship with my servant, and had soon become familiar with me. One day, when I was talking to him of the feeling and compassionate character of M. Abadie, he said, "Oh!

he is the best of men; this place is painful to him; and he accepted it only with the view of alleviating the condition of the prisoners. He succeeded a severe and avaricious man, who treated them exceedingly ill; accordingly, when he died, and the present governor succeeded, the change was felt in the very dungeons; you would have said (a very strange expression in the mouth of a jailer) that a sunbeam had penetrated into these dungeons. Men, to whom we are forbidden to mention what passes without, asked of us what had happened. In short, sir, you see how your servant lives; almost all our prisoners live equally well; M. Abadie feels himself relieved by every relief which it is in his power to give them, for he suffers in seeing them suffer."

The manner in which I was treated at the Bastille gave me reason to think that my residence there would not be long; and my composition, enlivened with agreeable reading (for I had Montaigne, Horace and La Bruyere with me), left me little time to tire. There was only one thing which sometimes made me melancholy: the walls of my room were covered with inscriptions, all expressive of the sad and gloomy reflections which had doubtless oppressed the unhappy men by whom this prison had been formerly occupied. I thought I still saw them wandering and lamenting, and their shades surrounding me.

But my thoughts were much more cruelly tormented by a subject which personally concerned me. In describing the society of Madame Harenc, I did not mention an honest fellow called Durant, who entertained a friendship for me, but who was not otherwise remarkable, except for his great simplicity of manners.

Now, one morning, on the ninth day of my captivity, the major of the Bastille entered my room with a grave and cold air, and, without any preamble, asked if I was acquainted with a person of the name of Durant. I answered in the affirmative. He then took up the pen, sat down, and continued his examination. The age, the size, the figure of this Durant, his profession, his residence, the time and the house at which I had become acquainted with him, were all enquired into; and the major wrote down each of my replies with a countenance of marble. Lastly, he read over my deposition, and presented me with a pen to sign it. I signed it accordingly, after which he withdrew.

Scarce had he left the room when my imagination was seized with all the most gloomy presages. What, then, can honest Durant have done? He goes every morning to the coffee-house; he will have undertaken my defence; he will have murmured loudly against that partial, unjust, and oppressive authority which overwhelms the weak and innocent out of complaisance to the man in power. In consequence of this imprudent way of talking, he himself will have been arrested, and thus, on my account, and out of his love for me, he will be doomed to an imprisonment more rigorous than mine; and as he is weak, much younger, and more timid than I, he will be seized with vexation and will sink under it; thus I shall be the cause of his death. And as for poor Madame Harenc, and all our good friends, in what a situation must they be? O God! how many misfortunes will my imprudence have caused! Thus a man, imprisoned and solitary, in the chains of absolute power, exaggerates in thought every sinister presage, and wraps his soul in gloomy ideas. From this moment I never enjoyed another sound sleep. All the dishes which the governor so carefully put aside for me were steeped in bitterness. I felt my heart struck, as it were, with a mortal blow, and if my confinement in the Bastille had continued eight days longer, it would have been my tomb.

In this situation I received a letter, which was forwarded to me by M. de Sartine. It was from Mademoiselle S——, an interesting and beautiful young lady with whom, before my disgrace, I was on the eve of being united. In this letter she expressed in the most affecting manner the sincere and tender interest which she felt in my misfortune, but assured me that her courage did not sink under it, and that her affection, far from having abated, had become only warmer and more constant.

I began my answer with expressing how sensible I was to so generous a friendship. But, I added, that misfortune had taught me a great lesson, which was never to associate anyone in the unforeseen dangers and sudden revolutions to which I was exposed, by the perilous condition of a man of letters; that, in my present circumstances, if I felt any degree of courage, it was owing to my situation as an insulated being; that my head would already have turned had I left without the walls of my prison a wife and children plunged in grief; and that, on this side at least, which to me would be the most sensible, I was resolved that adversity should have no hold of me.

Mademoiselle S—— was more mortified than grieved by my reply; and she soon after comforted herself by marrying M. S——.

At last, on the eleventh day of my imprisonment, about sunset, the governor came and informed me that I was again at liberty; and the same officer who had conducted me hither escorted me back to M. de Sartine. This magistrate expressed some joy at seeing me, but his joy was mingled with sadness. "Sir," said I, "I feel extremely grateful for your kindness, yet there is something in your manner which still afflicts me; while you congratulate, you look as if you pitied me. Can you have any other misfortune to announce?" (I was thinking of Durant.) "Yes, indeed," said he; "and have you no suspicion of what it may be? The King has deprived you of the *Mercury*." These words were a relief to me; and bowing my head, in sign of resignation, I replied, "So much the worse for the *Mercury*." "The evil," added he, "is perhaps not without remedy. M. de Saint-Florentin is at Paris; he takes an interest in you; call upon him to-morrow."

After leaving M. de Sartine, I ran to Madame Harenc's house, impatient to see Durant. I found him, and, amid the acclamations of joy raised by the whole company, I saw only him. "Ah, is it you?" said I, throwing myself on his neck, "what a relief to me!" The whole company were astonished by this transport at the sight of a man for whom I had never entertained any passionate attachment. They thought the Bastille had disordered my brain. "Ah! my friend," said Madame Harenc, embracing me, "you are free! how happy I am! But the *Mercury?*" "The *Mercury* is lost," said I. "But, madam, allow me to enquire about this unhappy man. What can he have done to occasion me so much grief?" I related the story of the major. It appeared that Durant had gone to M. de Sartine, had asked permission to see me, and had called himself my friend. M. de Sartine had desired that I should be asked who this Durant was, and instead of this plain question, the major had made an examination. Having my doubts cleared up, and my mind at ease upon this point, I employed my courage in reviving the hopes of my friends; and after receiving from them a thousand grateful marks of the most tender interest, I went and called on Madame Geoffrin.

"Oh, very well, so you are there," said she; "God be thanked! but the King deprives you of the *Mercury*. The Duke d'Aumont is quite happy; this will teach you to write letters." "And to repeat verses," added I, smiling. She asked if I was not going to commit some new piece of folly. "No, madam; but I am going, if possible, to remedy those I have committed." As she was really grieved at my misfortune, she found it necessary to comfort herself by giving me a scolding. "Why had I written these lines?" "I did not write them," said I. "Why, then, did you repeat them?"

"I repeated them at your request." "And, pray, did I know that they contained so bitter a satire? Ought you, who knew it, to have boasted of your knowledge? What imprudence! And then your good friends, De Presle and Vaudesir, go about publishing that you went to the Bastille on your parole, and were treated with every kind of attention and forbearance." "What! madam, should I have let it be supposed that I was dragged like a criminal." "You should have been silent, and not have braved people of their rank. Marshal Richelieu has not failed to observe that he was twice conducted to the Bastille like a criminal, and that it was very singular that you should be better treated than he." "Truly, madam, I am an object worthy of Marshal Richelieu's envy." "Yes, indeed, sir; they are hurt at the indulgence shown to the man who offends them, and they employ all their credit in order to obtain revenge; it is natural they should." "Poor creatures!" exclaimed I, with rather a contemptuous look; but as I soon perceived that my replies made her angry, I determined to keep silence. At last, when she had unburdened her heart, I rose with a modest air and bade her good evening.

Next morning I had scarcely awoke when Bury came into my room and announced Madame Geoffrin. "Well, sir," asked she, "how have you spent the night?" "Very well, madam; my sleep was interrupted neither by the undrawing of bolts, nor by the call of the sentinels." "Well," said she, "I never shut an eye." "How so, madam?" "How? do you not know? I had been unjust and cruel. Yesterday evening I overwhelmed you with reproaches. See what sort of creatures we are; the moment a man is unfortunate we reproach him; we make everything he does a crime"—here she began to weep. "Good God! madam," said I, "can you still be thinking of that? I, for my part, had quite forgotten it, or remember it only as an expression of your kindness. Everyone loves in his own way; yours is to scold your friends for the mischief they have done to themselves, as a mother scolds her child when it falls." She was relieved by these words, and asked what I intended to do. "I intend," said I, "to follow the advice given me by M. de Sartine—to call upon M. de Saint-Florentin; then to go to Versailles, and, if possible, to procure access to Madame de Pompadour and the Duke de Choiseul. But I am quite cool, and in full possession of my senses; I shall behave well, so you need not be at all uneasy." Such was this conversation; which does, I think, as much honour to Madame Geoffrin's character as any of the good actions of her life.

M. de Saint-Florentin appeared affected by my misfortune. He had done everything for me which his weakness and timidity admitted of, but he was seconded neither by Madame de Pompadour nor the Duke de Choiseul. He did not explain himself, but approved of my calling on them both; and I went to Versailles. Madame de Pompadour, on whom I first called, desired Quesnai to tell me that in the present state of things she could not see me. I was not surprised. I had no right to expect that she should raise to herself powerful enemies on my account.

The Duke de Choiseul admitted me, but immediately began to load me with reproaches. "I am extremely sorry," said he, "to see you again in misfortune; but you have really done everything in your power to bring it on yourself, and your offences have been so aggravated by imprudence that those who were most inclined to serve you have been under the necessity of abandoning you." "And pray, my lord duke, what have I done? What was it possible for me to do, within the four walls of a prison, which could add another offence to those of which you have heard me accused?" "In the first place," replied be, "the very day you were to go to the Bastille you went to the opera, and boasted, with an insulting air, that your being sent to the Bastille was a mere feint, an empty show of complaisance towards a duke and peer, against whom you had never ceased to harangue in the green-room; against whom you wrote the most injurious letters to the army; against whom, in short, you wrote the parody of 'Cinna'; not alone, indeed, but at a supper at Mademoiselle Clarion's, in company with the Count de Valbelle, the Abbé Galiani and other joyous guests. You told me nothing of all this, and yet I am assured it is perfectly true."

While he was thus speaking, I was recollecting myself; and after he had done, I began my answer. "My lord duke," said I, "your kindness is dear to me; your esteem is still more precious than your kindness; yet I consent to lose both your kindness and esteem, if in all these stories which you have heard there be a word of truth." "How!" cried he, shrugging his shoulders, "not a word of truth in what I have just said?" "Not a word; and I beg of you to allow me to sign my name upon your bureau to every successive article of what I am going to reply.

"The day that I was to go to the Bastille, I certainly had no inclination to go to the opera." I then gave him an account of the manner in which I had spent my time after leaving him. "Send," added I, "to M. de Sartine and Madame Harenc, and ascertain the time which I spent with them; it was precisely the opera hours.

"As to the green-room, it luckily happens that for six months I never set foot within it. The last time I was seen there—and I am quite certain as to the date—was at the first appearance of Duranci. Even before that time, I defy them to produce any improper expressions in which I ever indulged against the Duke d'Aumont.

"It happens no less luckily, my lord duke, that since the opening of the campaign, I have not written to the army; and if you can show me a letter, or even a note, which anyone there has received from me, I am willing to forfeit my character.

"With respect to the parody: it is utterly false that it was written at supper, or in the company of Mademoiselle Clairon. I declare, even, that I never heard a single line of it in her house; and if afterwards, when it became known, it was the subject of conversation there, as is very possible, it was, at least, not in my presence.

"Here, my lord duke, are four assertions, which, if you will allow me, I will write down and sign upon your bureau; and be assured that no man alive will prove the contrary, or will dare to maintain it to my face in your presence."

You may well suppose that, as the Duke de Choiseul listened to me, his passion was a little cooled. "Marmontel," said he, "I see that I have been imposed upon. You talk in a manner which leaves no room to doubt of your sincerity; truth alone would dare to hold such language. But you must put it in my power to affirm that the parody is not yours. Say who is the author, and you have the *Mercury* again." "Never, my lord duke, will I purchase the *Mercury* at such a price." "How so?" "Because I prefer your esteem to twelve thousand livres a year." "Upon my word," said he, "since the author is so unhandsome as not to declare himself, I do not see why you should spare him." "Why, my lord duke? because, after having made a rash use of his confidence, it would be the height of baseness to betray it. I have been imprudent, but will not be treacherous. He did not entrust me with his verses for the purpose of publishing them. My memory stole them from him; and if the theft was deserving of punishment, it is I who ought to suffer. Heaven forbid that he should declare himself, or ever be discovered! Then, indeed, I should be guilty; I should have caused his misfortune, and should die of grief. But as it is, where lies my crime? I have done what nobody makes any secret of doing. And allow me, my lord duke, to ask yourself, if, in convivial company, you never repeated an epigram or satirical poem which you had heard? Who, before me, was ever punished on that account? The 'Philippiques,' you know, was an infernal work. The Regent, the second man in the kingdom, was calumniated in a shocking manner; yet this infamous work went from hand to hand; it was written out; there were a thousand copies taken; yet who but the author was punished? I knew some lines, I repeated them, allowing nobody to take copies; and the whole crime of these lines consists in ridiculing the vanity of the Duke d'Aumont. Such, in two words, is the state of the case. Had he been accused of some murderous conspiracy, you would be right in compelling me to declare the author. But, being a mere piece of pleasantry, it really is not worth loading myself with the infamous character of an informer; and, though not my fortune only, but my life were in danger, I would still say with Nicomedes:

> "Le maître qui prit soin de former ma jeunesse,
> Ne m'a jamais appris à faire une bassesse."[1]

I perceived that the Duke de Choiseul thought my little pride somewhat ridiculous; and to let me see it, he asked, smiling, "who had been my Hannibal?" "My Hannibal," replied I, "my lord duke, is misfortune, which has long tried and taught me to suffer."

"Now this," replied he, "is what I call an honest man." Seeing him at length shaken, I said, "It is this honest man who is ruined and crushed, out of complaisance to the Duke d'Aumont, with no other motive besides his accusation, no proof but his bare assertion. What shocking tyranny!" Here the Duke de Choiseul stopped me. "Marmontel," said he, "the patent of the *Mercury* was a favour from the King; he withdrew it at pleasure; there is no tyranny there." "My lord duke," replied I, "so far as the King is concerned, the patent of the *Mercury* is a favour; but between the Duke d'Aumont and myself, the *Mercury* is my property, of which he has no right to deprive me by a false accusation. But it is not I whom he plunders; it is not I who am sacrificed. His vengeance is glutted by the sacrifice of more innocent victims. Know, my lord duke, that, having lost my father at the age of sixteen, and seeing myself surrounded by a poor and numerous family of orphans like myself, I promised to be a father to them all. I called upon Heaven and Nature to witness my vow, and from that time to this, I have sacredly fulfilled it. My own subsistence costs little; I can reduce both my wants and my expenses still lower. But what is to become of that crowd of unfortunate beings whose subsistence depended on the fruit of my industry—of two sisters, whose marriage portions I was to provide; of old women, whose age required a little comfort; of the sister of my mother, a widow, poor and burdened with children. I had flattered them with the hope of being placed in easy circumstances; they began already to feel the effects of my fortune; the benefits derived from it were no longer likely to be withdrawn; but all of a sudden they are to hear! . . . . Ah! there it is that the Duke d'Aumont should go and taste the fruits of his vengeance; there it is that he would hear cries, and see tears flow! Let him go there and count the number of his victims; let him drink up the tears of childhood and age; let him insult the objects whom he has deprived of bread—there it is that his triumph awaits him! He asked it, I am told, as the reward of his services; it is a reward, indeed, which is worthy of his heart!" At these words my tears flowed, and the Duke de Choiseul, as much affected as myself, embraced me, and said, "My dear Marmontel, you move me to the very soul; I have done you, perhaps, a great deal of injury, but I will now repair it."

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[1] "The master who instructed my youth never taught me to be guilty of meanness."

With his usual vivacity he then took up the pen and wrote to the Abbé Barthelemi: "My dear Abbé,—The King has granted you the patent of the *Mercury;* but I have just seen and heard Marmontel; he has affected me—has convinced me of his innocence; it would be unworthy of you to accept the spoils of an innocent man. Refuse the *Mercury*, and depend upon being no loser." He wrote to M. de Saint-Florentin: "My dear Sir,—You have received an order from the King to make out the patent of the *Mercury;* but I have seen Marmontel, and must talk to you about him. Do nothing hastily till we have conversed together." He read these notes, sealed and sent them off. He then desired me to call upon Madame de Pompadour, to whom he gave me a note, which he did not read, but which was extremely favourable, for I was introduced the moment she cast her eyes on it.

Madame de Pompadour was indisposed, and kept her bed. I approached, and had at first the same reproaches to encounter from her as from the Duke de Choiseul. I answered them in the same manner, and with still greater mildness. "Such, then," said I, "are the new offences which are alleged against me in order to prevail upon the King, after imprisoning me for eleven days, to extend his severity so far as to pronounce my ruin. Had I been at liberty, perhaps, madam, I should at least have made my way into your presence; I should have proved the falsehood of these accusations, and by confessing to you my real and only fault I should have obtained your forgiveness. But my enemies began by getting me enclosed within four walls; they took advantage of the period of my captivity to calumniate me at leisure and with impunity; and the gates of my prison are opened only to show me the abyss which they have dug under my feet.

But it is not enough to drag myself and my unfortunate family into this abyss; they are aware that an aiding hand may still draw us out; they dread lest this hand, which has already loaded us with so many favours, should again become our support; they deprive us of this last and only hope, and because the Duke d'Aumont's pride is wounded, a crowd of innocent persons must be deprived of all consolation. Yes, madam, such has been the object of those lies which prepossessed you against me, by leading you to consider me either as a wicked man or as a fool. This, more than any other, is the tender part by which my enemies have contrived to pierce my heart.

"At present, in order to deprive me of all power of defending myself, they call upon me to name the author of that parody, of which I have repeated a few lines. They know my character so well, madam, as to be quite sure that I will never name him. But they assert that by not accusing him, I condemn myself: so that, if I will not be infamous, I am undone. Certainly, if my safety can be purchased only at this price, my ruin is fully decided. But when, madam, did honesty become a crime? When did it become necessary for the accused to prove his innocence? and when was the accuser exempted from the obligation of bringing proof? Yet I will repel by proofs, an attack which is supported by none. These proofs are my writings, my character, which is sufficiently known, and the whole course of my life. Since I was so unfortunate as to be numbered among literary men, all the satirical writers have been my enemies. There is no kind of insolence which I have not received and patiently endured. Now, let them produce out of my writings an epigram, a bitter attack, a satire—in short, anything at all resembling the present, and I am willing that it should be ascribed to me. But if I have disdained such mean vengeance, if my pen, always decent and moderate, has never been dipped in gall, why should it be believed, upon the bare assertion of a man blinded by rage, that this pen has begun with distilling its venom upon him. I am calumniated, madam, before you and before that good King who cannot believe himself to be imposed upon ; and were it not for the generous pity with which I have inspired the Duke de Choiseul, neither the King nor yourself would ever have known that I was calumniated."

Scarce had I ended when the Duke de Choiseul was announced. He had lost no time, for I had left him dressing. "Well, madam," said he, "you have heard Marmontel; what do you think of the injury done him?" "I think, sir," replied she, "that it is horrible, and that the *Mercury* must be restored to him." "Such is my opinion," said the duke. "But," replied she, "there would be an impropriety in the King appearing to change entirely in the course of a day; there is a step, which must be taken by the Duke d'Aumont himself." "Ah! madam," exclaimed I, "you pronounce my doom; he will never take such a step as you desire." "He shall do it," said she; "M. de Saint-Florentin is with the King; he is coming to see me, and I will speak to him. Go and wait for him at his house."

The old minister was not better pleased than myself with the turn which the weakness of Madame de Pompadour had taken, nor did he conceal how bad an omen he thought it. In fact, the obstinate pride of the Duke d'Aumont was quite insuperable. Neither his friend the Count d'Angiviller, nor his physician Bouvart, nor his companion the Duke de Duras, could inspire him with the least dignity of sentiment. As there was nothing in himself which could procure respect, he was at least determined to make himself feared; and he returned to Court fully determined not to yield, declaring that he would regard as enemies all those who should propose to him taking any step in my favour. Nobody dared to make head against one who was so near the person of the King; and all the great interest that was taken in my fortune, ended in allowing me an annuity of a hundred and twenty guineas upon the *Mercury*. The Abbé Barthelemi refused the patent; and it was granted to a person of the name of Lagarde, Madame de Pompadour's librarian, and the worthy favourite of Colin, her man of business.

Ten years after, the Duke de Choiseul, happening to dine with me, put me in mind of our conversations, and said that he would have wished there had been some witnesses to them. My memory, long since become faint, has enabled me to give only a very slight sketch of them. But the situation must have powerfully inspired me; for he added, that he never in his life had heard a man so eloquent as I was at that moment. Talking on this subject, he said, "Do you know what hindered Madame de Pompadour from making the *Mercury* be restored to you? It was that scoundrel Colin, wishing to give it to his friend Lagarde." This Lagarde was so infamous that, in the society of the *Menus Plaisirs*, in which he was endured, he went by the name of "Lagarde-Bicêtre."[1] It was to Lagarde-Bicêtre then, my children, that I was sacrificed.

This new editor, being equally destitute of information and talents, did his duty so ill, that the *Mercury* lost its credit and sale, and was likely to be no more in a condition to pay the annuities with which it was burdened. The terrified annuitants came and besought me to resume it. But after once throwing off this irksome chain, I was resolved not to be entangled any longer; luckily Lagarde died, when the *Mercury* was executed not quite so ill, and its dissolution became slower. But in order to preserve the annuities, it became necessary at last to make it a bookseller's concern.

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[1] The Bicêtre is one of the prisons of Paris.

BOOK VII

My adventure with the Duke d'Aumont was of great use to me in two respects: it led me to give up a project of marriage too hastily formed, and of which there is reason to believe I should afterwards have had cause to repent; and it sowed in the mind of Bouvart the seeds of that friendship which was afterwards so useful to me. But these were not the only good offices which the Duke d'Aumont did me by his persecution.

In the first place, my soul, which had been too much softened by the delights of Paris, of Avenay, of Passy and of Versailles, stood in need of adversity to restore the firmness and tone which it had lost: the Duke d'Aumont had taken care to restore the ancient vigour and courage of my character. In the second place, the *Mercury*, though it did not employ me very seriously, failed not to engross my attention, to waste my time, and to interrupt other pursuits to which I should have been inclined. It was a bar to every enterprise which could have been honourable to my talents, while it subjected them to a minute and almost mechanical drudgery. The Duke d'Aumont had set them at liberty, and had placed me under the fortunate necessity of putting them to a worthy and dignified use. Lastly, I had determined to devote to the composition of the *Mercury* eight or ten of the best years of my life, in hopes of amassing about £4,000, which formed the boundary of my ambition. Now the leisure procured me by the Duke d'Aumont produced almost as much in the same number of years, without at all encroaching upon the pleasures of my society in town, and of the delicious rural retreats in which I passed the finest seasons of the year.

I have not mentioned the advantage of being received into the French Academy sooner than I should have been had I composed nothing but the *Mercury*. The Duke d'Aumont certainly had no intention to lead me thither by the hand; yet he did so without design, and even while endeavouring to prevent it.

I have observed more than once, and in the most critical events of my life, that when Fortune appeared to thwart me her arrangements were more favourable than the gratification of my own wishes could have been. Here was I ruined; and yet, my children, you will see, from amid my ruin, a happiness arise, as uniform, as peaceful, and as seldom interrupted as a man of my profession can hope to enjoy. In order to establish it upon its solid and natural foundation, that is to say, upon tranquility of mind, I began with freeing myself from domestic anxiety. Age or disease, particularly that which seemed to be hereditary in my family, successively thinned the number of those worthy relations whom it gave me so much pleasure to place in easy circumstances. I had already prevailed upon my aunts to give over every kind of trade; and, after paying off our debts, had given annuities in addition to the revenue arising from my little property. Now that these pensions of £12 10s. each were reduced to the number of five, there remained for myself half my annuity of a thousand crowns upon the *Mercury*. I had, besides, about twenty guineas, the interest of about four hundred, which I had employed in giving surety for M. Odde. Besides this, there was an annuity of about £22 upon the Duke of Orleans; and the balance which remained, after closing the accounts for the *Mercury*, enabled me to purchase some stock. For the maintenance, therefore, of my servant and myself I had an income of nearly £125; now I never had spent more. Madame Geoffrin even proposed that the payment of my rent should be henceforth dropped; but I begged her to allow me to try yet another year whether my means would not be sufficient, and assured her, that if it straitened me, I would not blush to own it. I was not reduced to this extremity. Most unhappily, the number of pensions which I paid was reduced by the death of my two sisters, who were in the convent at Clermont, and were carried off by the same disease which had proved fatal to our father and mother. Shortly after, I lost my two old aunts, who alone continued to stay in the house. Death left me only the sister of my mother, the aunt d'Albois, who is still alive. I thus came every year to the use of some of my own benefactions. The first editions of my tales formed another source which began to enrich me.

My mind being at ease with respect to fortune, the French Academy formed my sole ambition; and even this ambition was quiet and moderate. Before reaching my fortieth year I had three years more to devote to study; and in three years I should possess additional claims to this appointment. My translation of Lucan was going on; I was at the same time preparing materials for my "Art of Poetry," and the celebrity of my tales continued to increase with every new edition. My future prospects, therefore, seemed in every way agreeable.

You recollect the obliging and friendly manner in which Bouret had begun his acquaintance with me. When it was once formed, I had been admitted to all his societies. In one of my tales of "La Veillée" I have drawn the character of the most intimate of his female friends, the beautiful Madame Gaulard. One of her two sons, an agreeable man, held the employment of receiver-general at Bordeaux; he had taken a journey to Paris, and, on the evening before his departure, being one of the finest days of the year, we were dining together at our friend Bouret's, with a large and splendid company. The magnificence of this house and the embellishments which it derived from the fine arts, his sumptuous table, the opening verdure of the gardens, the serenity of a clear sky, and still more the agreeable manners of a landlord, who, when surrounded by his guests, seemed to be the lover of every woman and the best friend of every man—in short, everything which can spread good humour through an entertainment had united to enliven our minds. Feeling myself the freest and most independent of men, I was like a bird escaped from its cage, leaping with joy through the air; and, to conceal nothing, the excellent wine we were drinking contributed not a little to give wing to my thoughts.

Amid this gaiety, the youngest son of Madame Gaulard was taking leave of us; and, talking of Bordeaux, he asked if there was anything in which he could be useful to me. "In giving me a good reception," said I, "when I shall visit that opulent city and its noble harbour, for among my reveries of the future this is one of the most interesting." "Had I known that," said he, "you could have accomplished it to-morrow. I could have offered you a place in my carriage." "And I," said one of the company (a Jew of the name of Gradis, one of the richest merchants in Bordeaux), "could have undertaken to transport your baggage." "My baggage," said I, "would not have been burdensome; but my return to Paris——" "In six weeks," replied Gaulard, "I would have escorted you back." "I suppose then," said I, "all this is now impossible?" "Quite possible," said they, "so far as regards us; but we set out to-morrow." I then whispered a few words to the faithful Bury, who waited at table, and sent him to pack up my clothes; then, drinking to the health of my travelling companions, "Here,' said I, "am I ready; we set out to-morrow." The whole company applauded so prompt a resolution, and drank to the travellers' health.

It is difficult to conceive a more agreeable journey. The road was magnificent, and the weather so mild and beautiful, that even in the night-time we drove and slept with the glasses down. The directors and receivers of of the revenue received us everywhere with the most eager attention. I thought myself transported to those poetical ages and those beautiful climates which were so famed for splendid hospitality.

At Bordeaux, I was received and treated in the best possible manner; that is to say, I had good dinners, excellent wine, and even salutes from the vessels which I visited. But though this city contained men of wit, who could make themselves extremely agreeable, I enjoyed their society less than I could have wished. They were possessed with a fatal rage for playing at dice, which darkened their mind and engrossed their soul. I was daily grieved to see someone agonised by the loss which he had suffered. They seemed to dine and sup together only with a view of falling upon each other as soon as they rose from table; and there appeared to me something monstrous in this mixture of fierce avidity with social enjoyments and affections.

No society could be more dangerous than this for a receiver-general of the revenue. However untouched he might leave the public money, the mere responsibility of his character should be a prohibition against all games of chance, as exposing to shipwreck, if not his fidelity, at least the confidence reposed in him. I was of some use to Gaulard in confirming his resolution of never allowing himself to be seduced by the contagion of example.

There was another cause which impaired the pleasure of my residence at Bordeaux. The maritime war had inflicted a deep wound on the commerce of this great city. I saw only its ruins in the beautiful canal which was before my eyes. But I could easily form an idea of what it must be in its peaceful and prosperous condition.

Some mercantile houses, where there was no play, were those which I frequented most and found most agreeable. But none attracted me so strongly as that of Ainsly. This merchant was an English philosopher, whose character inspired veneration. His son, though still very young, gave the promise of an excellent man; and his two daughters, though not beautiful, had an unaffected charm of mind and manner, which appeared to me even more engaging than beauty. Jenny, the youngest of the two, had made a strong impression on my soul. I composed for her the romance of "Petrarque," and sang it as I bade her adieu.

During the leisure which was afforded me by the society of a city, in which everyone spent the morning in business, I indulged my taste for poetry, and composed my "Address to the Poets." I was amused also by the little humorous pieces which were then printing at Paris, against a man who deserved to be punished for his insolence, but whose punishment was certainly very rigorous; this was Le Franc de Pompignan.[1]

His literary merit, though considerable in his province, was at Paris very moderate, yet still sufficient to procure esteem; and this esteem he might peaceably have enjoyed, had he not been so intoxicated by the excess of his vanity and presumptuous ambition. Unhappily, he was too much flattered in his academies of Montauban and Toulouse. There he was accustomed to hear himself applauded whenever he opened his mouth, nay, even before he had spoken. He was extolled in the journals, whose favour he contrived to gain or purchase, so that he thought himself a man of importance in literature; and unfortunately, too, he combined with the arrogance of a parish lord the pride of a president of the upper court in his city of Montauban, which produced a character every way ridiculous. In consequence of the opinion which he entertained of himself, it had appeared to him unjust that, at the moment he expressed a desire to be a member of the French Academy, he had not been received with open arms; and in 1758, when Sainte-Palaye had obtained a preference over him, he expressed a lofty resentment. Two years after the Academy bestowed its votes upon him, and the unanimity of the election ought to have flattered him extremely. But instead of the modesty which was affected even by the greatest men, at least on their entrance, he displayed the irritation of offended pride, with an inconceivable excess of pride and asperity. The poor man had formed the ambition of holding some office or other in the education of the royal family. He knew that the Dauphin did not like Voltaire's religious principles, and viewed the "Encyclopædia" with an unfavourable eye; he paid his court to that prince, and hoped to recommend himself by his "Sacred Odes," the magnificent edition of which ruined his bookseller. The showing him his translation of the "Georgics" would, he thought, be flattering to his vanity. But he did not know with whom his own vanity had to do; he knew not that when the Dauphin himself read this translation, so laboriously hammered out into harsh and rugged lines, quite devoid of colouring and harmony, and compared it with the masterpiece of Latin poetry, he viewed it with the eye of satirical criticism, and turned it into derision. His discourse, on being received into the French Academy, appeared to him to afford an opportunity of striking a party blow, by publicly attacking that class of literary men who were called philosophers, particularly Voltaire and the writers of the "Encyclopædia."

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[1] See note (21) at the end.

He had just made this sally when I set out for Bordeaux, and the success which he met with was almost as astonishing as his arrogance. The Academy had listened in silence to this insolent harangue; the public had applauded it. Pompignan came forth triumphant, and puffed up with vainglory.

It was not long, however, before the *faceties Parisiennes*[1] began a light skirmish against him; and I learned from one of his own friends, President Barbeau, who called upon me, that "all Paris was laughing at poor Pompignan." He showed me the first sheets which had just come to his hands, they were the *quand* and the *pourquoi*. I saw the turn that the pleasantry was taking. "So you are the friend of M. le Franc," said I. "Alas!" said he, "I am." "Then I am sorry for you, for I see the laughers at his heels. Here are the *quand* and the *pourquoi;* the *si*, the *mais*, the *car*, will not be long of following; and rest assured that your friend will not be dismissed till he has gone through the whole round of the particles." The correction was still more severe than I had foreseen; he was ridiculed in every possible way. He attempted to defend himself seriously; this made him only the more ridiculous. He addressed a memorial to the King, which was contemptuously thrown aside. Voltaire, in laughing at his expense, seemed to renew his youth; both in verse and prose, his satire was more gay, more lively, more rich in amusing and original ideas than it had ever been. No interval elapsed between one sally and another. The public never ceased to laugh at poor Le Franc's expense. He was under the necessity of shutting himself up in his own house, that he might not hear the song made upon himself sung in company, and see himself pointed at with the finger; at last, he went and buried himself in his castle, where he died, without ever daring to make his appearance again at the Academy. I felt, I confess, no pity for him; not only because he was the aggressor, but because his aggression had been deep and serious, and such as, had it been listened to, tended to no less than to proscribe a number of literary men, whom he publicly accused as the enemies of the throne and of the altar.

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[1] See note (22) at the end.

When Gaulard and I were on the eve of returning to Paris, he said to me, "Why should we return by the same road? Would you not rather like to make a tour by Toulouse, Montpellier, Nismes, Avignon, Vaucluse, Aix, Marseilles, Toulon, and then by Lyons and Geneva, where we should see Voltaire, who was an acquaintance of my father?" You may well suppose that I embraced with transport this most agreeable scheme, and, before setting out, I wrote to Voltaire.

At Toulouse, we were received by an intimate friend of Madame Gaulard, M. de Saint-Amant, a man who possessed all the frankness and politeness of old times, and who held a very good employment in the city. For my part, I no longer found it to contain any of my acquaintances; I had even some difficulty in recognising the city, so much was it diminished in my eyes by the habit of seeing Paris and the greater objects with which I compared it.

From Toulouse to Beziers, we were employed in observing the canal of Languedoc. It was, indeed, an object which raised my admiration, because I saw the union of grandeur and simplicity, two characters which never appear together without causing astonishment.

The junction of the two seas and the communication between them, were the result of two or three great ideas combined together by genius. The first was that of forming a huge collection of water in that species of cup which is formed by the mountains on the side of Revel, some leagues from Cacasson, so as to be the perpetual source and reservoir of the canal. The second was the selection of an eminence lower than the reservoir, yet commanding, on one side, the interval between that point and Beziers; so that the waters of the reservoir, being conducted thither by a natural slope, might be kept suspended in a vast level, and by merely extending on one side towards Beziers, and on the other towards Toulouse, might supply the canal and transport the vessels on one side into the Orbe, and, on the other, into the Garonne. A third and leading idea had then been to form locks on every spot where the vessels would have occasion to rise or descend, which, as is well known, were filled and emptied at pleasure, so as to receive the vessels, thus answering the purpose of ladders, by which these might rise or descend in both directions to the level of the canal.

I will not trouble you with all the measures which were adopted by the foresight and industry of the inventor, in order to furnish the canal with an inexhaustible supply of water, and to regulate its quantity without ever making it to depend on the course of the neighbouring rivers or to have any communication with them; I shall only say that I overlooked none of these particulars. But the chief object of my attention was the basin of Saint-Ferreal, the reservoir of the waters of the canal. This basin, formed, as I have described, by a circle of mountains, is 2,222 fathoms in circumference and 160 feet in depth. The narrow pass of the surrounding mountains is closed by a wall thirty-six fathoms thick. When it is full, the waters burst forth into cascades; but in times of drought these overflowings cease, and the supply is then drawn from the bottom of the reservoir in the following manner. In the thickness of the dyke two vaults are formed at the distance of forty feet, and are extended under the reservoir. To one of these vaults three tubes of brass are vertically adapted, whose bore equals that of the largest cannon, and by which, when their cocks are opened, the water of the reservoir falls into an aqueduct formed along the second vault; so that, when you penetrate to these tubes, you have 160 feet of water over your head. We made a point of advancing thus far by the light which our guide carried in a chaffing-dish, for no other light could have withstood the commotion of the air, which was soon excited under the vault by the bursting out of the waters, when our attendant, with a strong lever of iron, suddenly opened the cock of one of the three tubes, and then those of the other two. At the opening of the first, the most dreadful thunder echoed beneath the vault, and twice, peal on peal, this roar redoubled. The profound emotion, and, to speak the truth, the affright, did not prevent us from going to see what was passing under the second vault. We made our way to it amid the sound of this subterraneous thunder, and there we saw three torrents rushing through the opening of the tubes. I know of no motion in Nature that can be compared to the violence of the pillar of water which burst from these tubes in waves of foam. The eye could not follow it; we grew giddy by even looking at it. The border of the aqueduct, into which this torrent rushed, was only four feet broad; it was covered with a very smooth, moist and slippery kind of freestone. There we stood, pale and motionless, and, had our feet slipped, the water of the torrent would have carried us in a twinkling to the distance of a mile. We went out shuddering, and felt the rocks, on which the dyke rests, trembling at a hundred paces distance. Though now well acquainted with the mechanism of the canal, I could not but be again astonished when I saw from the foot of the little hill of Beziers a long staircase, as it were, of eight contiguous locks, by which the vessels rose or descended with equal facility.

At Beziers I met with M. de la Sabliere, an old friend of mine, and a military officer, who, after enjoying for a long time the pleasures of Paris, had come to spend his old age in his native city, and enjoy a respect of which his services were deserving. In the voluptuous retreat which he had formed, he received us with that Gascon gaiety, which was aided by the comfort of a respectable fortune, by a free and tranquil state of mind, by a taste for reading, by a little of the ancient philosophy, and by that healthful air for which Beziers is so celebrated. He asked about La Popliniere, at whose house we had spent many happy days together. "Alas!" replied I, "we now never meet. His fatal selfishness has made him forget the duties of friendship. I will now disclose to you what I have never mentioned to any other person.

"Immediately after the marriage of my sister, I had procured her husband an employment in the tobacco warehouse at Chinon; an easy office, which my sister might have retained even in the event of her husband's death. This office was worth a hundred louis. La Popliniere had at the same time procured for one of his relations the employment of receiver in the custom-house at Saumur, which, though it presented a great variety of very difficult business, was only worth fifty pounds. La Popliniere made no scruple of begging me to make an exchange, alleging the convenience of his friend, who resided at Chinon. As he asked this favour in the name of friendship, I made no hesitation in consenting. I even attempted to persuade myself that the talents of my brother-in-law would have been buried in a tobacco warehouse, whereas, in a district which required a well-informed, vigilant and attentive man, his merit might become known, and might thus lead to promotion. I thought myself, therefore, doing him no injury; and this generosity, which I exercised at his expense, was carried to excess, for, as the employment of Chinon was double in value to that of Saumur, La Popliniere offered, in exchange for this, to give fifty louis a year; but I declined receiving any compensation beyond the mere pleasure of obliging him. Well, this trifling office, in which my brother-in-law had restored order, regularity and activity, and which he had been allowed to carry on along with that which he afterwards obtained in the salt-office, was, without my knowledge, solicited by somebody for another, so that my brother-in-law lost it." "And did La Popliniere really allow you to be deprived of it?" "What would you have had him do?" "What! had he no interest with his own body? Ought he not at least to have acknowledged and strongly urged what you had done for him?" "Well," added I, "what will you say when you learn that he himself, without dropping me the least hint, solicited this employment for his secretary, and took it from my sister's husband?" "It is impossible." "It is but too true; I have been told so by the farmers-general themselves." The astonished Sabliere kept silence for some time and then said, "My friend, we both loved him; let us think of that alone, and throw a veil over the rest." Accordingly we merely reminded each other of the happy period when La Popliniere made so agreeable a landlord, and when his house exhibited a moving gallery of scenes and characters. "I still love to recollect it," said he; "but, like a dream, from which I feel no regret at waking."

Montpellier presented nothing interesting, except the botanic garden; and even that was only an agreeable walk to us, for we were both equally ignorant of botany; but as we were connoisseurs of female beauty, we had the pleasure of casting our eyes upon some ladies who, notwithstanding their brown complexion, appeared to us very agreeable. They were distinguished by a lively air, a brisk step, and an ogling eye. I observed, in particular, that their feet were very handsome, which in every country promises well.

After what we had heard from travellers and artists, we expected that Nismes would have struck us with admiration; but here we were disappointed. There are some things whose grandeur or beauty is so much exaggerated by common report, that the opinion formed at a distance must unavoidably be diminished by a nearer view. The amphitheatre did not appear to us vast, and the building surprised us only by its lumpish weight. We took pleasure in seeing the *maison quarré*, though only that kind of pleasure which is afforded by a little thing regularly executed.

I must not forget that at Nismes, in the cabinet of a naturalist named Seguier, we saw a collection of grey stones, which, being broken in layers, like slate, present, very distinctly, the appearance of two halves of an incrusted fish. I was not surprised at these till I was assured by this naturalist that the stones are found in the Alps, and that the species of fish which they contain is no longer found in our seas.

"Quærite, quos agitat mundi labor." [1]—LUCAN.

We passed hastily through Avignon, that we might go and fall into ecstasies at Vaucluse. But here, too, we were obliged to lower the idea we had formed of the enchanted abode of Petrarch and Laura. The waters of Vaucluse are like those of Castalia, of Peneus, and of Simois. Their fame is due to the Muses; their true charm is that of the verses by which they are celebrated. Not but that the cascade in the fountain of Vaucluse is beautiful, both by the quantity of water and by its violent agitation among the rocks by which its fall is broken; but, with all due submission to the poets who have described it, the fountain is wholly devoid of natural ornaments; its banks are dry, bare and rough, nor is it till we reach the foot of the cascade that we see the banks of the stream which it forms invested with any appearance of smiling verdure. Yet, before leaving the source of its waters, we sat down, we indulged in reverie, and fixed our eyes upon ruins which seemed to be the remains of the residence of Petrarch. We yielded for some moments to a poetical illusion, and fancied we saw wandering around these ruins the shades of the two lovers from whom these banks have derived their fame.

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[1] "Seek those whom the workings of the universe employ. —PHARS. I., 417.

A little village, however, which is soon after surrounded and its walls washed by the river of Vaucluse, is an object more really formed for giving pleasure to the eyes; it is called L'Isle. We really fancied we saw an enchanted isle as we walked around it, under two rows of mulberry trees and between two streams of pure and clear water. Handsome groups of young Jewesses, who were walking like us, aided the illusion produced by the beauty of the place; and excellent trout, with some fine cray-fish, which were served to us in the inn at supper, after this delightful walk, made the pleasures of sight and of imagination be succeeded by those of a new sense.

The fine weather with which our journey had been so agreeably accompanied ever since we left Paris, left us on the borders of Provence. We met with rain in the province where it rains most seldom. We passed through the city of Aix only, as being on our road to Marseilles and Toulon; we were obliged, however, to pay a customary visit to the governor of the province, who resided in this city. This governor, the unworthy son of Marshal Villars, received me with a politeness which would have been very flattering from any other person. He urged us very much to stay till the *Fête-Dieu.* We declined it; but he made us promise to return to Aix by the evening before this *fête*, that we might see next day the procession of King René.

These two celebrated ports excited in me a very strong interest and eager attention. The importance of Marseilles was derived from commerce, and that of Toulon from war; and though there was much worth seeing at Marseilles—a new and very magnificent city—yet the little time which we spent there was wholly employed in examining the harbour, its fortifications, its warehouses, and all the great undertakings which now languished in consequence of the war, but which peace would again render flourishing. At Toulon the harbour was, in like manner, the sole object of our attention. We recognised the hand of Louis XIV. in those magnificent establishments, on which his grandeur was stamped, and in which everything connected both with the building and the arming of vessels still suggested the idea of a respectable naval power.

Here the thing which seemed most likely to astonish me was that which occasioned the least surprise. I had been very desirous to see the open sea. I saw it without emotion; the pictures of Vernet had represented it so faithfully that the reality excited no strong sensation; my eyes were as accustomed to it as if I had been born on its shores.

The Duke de Villars seemed to have been desirous of our witnessing the gala which he was to give on the evening before the *Fête-Dieu*. We arrived at night and found all the best company in the city assembled at a ball, card-party and great supper.

Next day the bad weather prevented us from seeing the procession which had been described to us as so brilliant. A few specimens, however, were exhibited; for instance, a drunken porter, who represented the Queen of Sheba; another, who was King Solomon; three others, who were the Magi; and everyone up to the ears in dirt. This did not prevent the Queen of Sheba from leaping in cadence, and King Solomon from bounding behind her. I admired the seriousness with which the Provençaux viewed this spectacle, and took great care to imitate their respect. Yet I had sometimes great difficulty to keep from laughing. Among others, I observed a person who carried a white cloth at the end of a pole, and behind him three other clumsy fellows, who reeled about in the street like drunkards every time that the man with the white cloth laid down his staff. I enquired what was the mystery which this represented. "Do you not see," replied the magistrate to whom I spoke, "that they are the three Magi led by the star, and losing their way whenever it disappears?" I suppressed my mirth. Nothing takes away all inclination to laugh so much as the fear of being stoned.

The governor had insisted on our dining with him next day before we set out. At this dinner he took a pride in assembling men of merit, at the head of whom was M. de Mouclar. I was previously impressed with the highest esteem for this great magistrate. I expressed it with that ingenuous feeling, which bears no resemblance to flattery. He seemed pleased, and answered with kindness. Almost immediately after rising from table, I took leave of the Duke de Villars, as grateful as it was possible to be for the attention of a man whom I did not esteem.

On our road from Aix to Lyons I met with nothing remarkable, except the honesty of our landlady at Tain, a village near that little territory of Hermitage which is so celebrated for its wine. At this village, while our horses were changing, I said to the landlady, holding out a louis d'or, "Madam, if you have any excellent Hermitage red wine, give me six bottles, and pay yourself out of this louis." She looked as if satisfied with my confidence. "Excellent red wine," said she, "I have none; but I have some of the very best white wine." I trusted to what she said; and this wine, which she gave me at two shillings a bottle, proved to be perfect nectar.

Being in haste to reach Geneva, we did not even take time to see Lyons, but waited till our return for the pleasure of admiring, in that great and industrious city, the perfection of all the manufactures subservient to luxury.

Nothing could be more singular or more original than the reception we received from Voltaire. He was in bed when we arrived. He held out his arms, embraced me, and wept for joy; he embraced, in like manner, the son of his old friend, M. Gaulard. "You find me at the point of death," said he; "come and restore me to life, or receive my last sigh." My companion was terrified at this first address. But as I had heard Voltaire say a hundred times that he was dying, I made a sign to Gaulard not to be afraid. Accordingly, next moment, the dying man desired us to sit down by his bedside. "My friends," said he, "how happy I am to see you, especially at a time when I have a man with me whom you will be delighted to hear. It is M. de l'Ecluse, surgeon-dentist to the late King of Poland, and now proprietor of an estate near Montargis. He has been kind enough to come and repair the irreparable teeth of Madame Denis. He is a delightful man; but do you not know him?" "The only l'Ecluse that I know," said I, "is an actor in the old *opéra-comique*." "It is he, my friend; it is just himself. Since you know him, you have heard that song of the 'Grinder,' which he acts and sings so well." Instantly then Voltaire begins imitating l'Ecluse, and, with his naked arms and his sepulchral voice, acts the Grinder and sings the song:

"Oh! where can I put her?
My sweet little girl!
Oh! where can I put her?
They'll steal her and——"

We fell into bursts of laughter; but he went on quite seriously. "I am a bad imitator," said he, "you must hear l'Ecluse; he is truth itself. Oh, what pleasure will it give you! Go and call upon Madame Denis. As for myself, indisposed as I am, I will rise and dine with you. We will eat some wild-fowl, and will listen to M. de l'Ecluse. My illness has been suspended by the pleasure of seeing you, and I feel myself quite a new man."

Madame Denis received us with that cordiality in which consisted the charm of her character. She presented l'Ecluse to us; and at dinner, Voltaire excited him by the most flattering praises to give us the pleasure of hearing him. He displayed all his talents, with which we pretended to be charmed. This was absolutely necessary, for Voltaire would never have forgiven us had our applause been faint.

Our walk in the garden was spent in talking of Paris, of the *Mercury*, of the Bastille (which I passed over in a few words), of the theatre, of the "Encyclopædia," and of poor Le Franc, whom he was still harassing; for his physician, he said, had ordered him, by way of exercise, to hunt Pompignan an hour or two every morning. He told me to assure our friends that they should daily receive from him some new piece of pleasantry, and he faithfully kept his promise.

On our return from walking, he played a few games at chess with M. Gaulard, who, out of respect, allowed him to win. At last he returned to speak of the theatre and of the revolution which had been effected in it by Mademoiselle Clairon. "Well," said he, "is there anything so very wonderful in the new style which she has adopted?" "It is a new talent," said I; "it is the perfection of the art; or, rather, it is Nature herself, such as she can be painted by the most beautiful imagination." I then assumed a higher tone of thought and expression, in the hope of enabling him to conceive how truly and and how sublimely she became, according to her different characters, Camilla, Roxana, Hermione, Ariana, and, above all, Electra. I exhausted all the little eloquence I possessed in inspiring him with the same enthusiasm for Clairon which animated myself; and I was enjoying the emotion which my words produced, till at last he began to speak. "Well, my friends," said he, with transport, "this is just like Madame Denis; the progress she has made is astonishing—incredible! I wish you saw her acting Zara, Alzira, Idame; nothing can go beyond her." "Madame Denis act Zara? Madame Denis compared to Clairon?" I fell from the clouds; so true it is that taste suits itself to the objects which it has the means of enjoying, and that the sage maxim—

> "Quand on n'a pas ce que l'on aime,
> Il faut aimer ce que l'on a——"[1]

—is not only a lesson given us by Nature, but one of the means which she reserves for augmenting our pleasures.

We resumed our walk; and while Voltaire talked with Gaulard of his former acquaintance with this young man's father, I conversed with Madame Denis, and reminded her of the agreeable time we had spent together.

In the evening I led Voltaire to the subject of the King of Prussia. He talked of him with a sort of cool magnanimity, like a man who disdained a too easy revenge, or like an undeceived lover, who, after quitting his mistress, forgives the resentment and rage in which she has indulged.

Our conversation at supper turned upon the literary men whom he esteemed most; and among these I could easily distinguish such as he loved from the bottom of his heart. They were not those who boasted most loudly of being in his favour. Before going to bed, he read to us two new cantos of the "Maid of Orleans"; and Madame Denis desired us to observe that, since he came to Delices, this was the only day he had spent without returning to his closet.

Next day we took care to leave him, at least, part of the morning, and we let him know that we would wait till he rang. We were introduced about eleven and found him still in bed. "Young man," said he, "I hope you have not given up poetry; let me see some of your new compositions. I tell you all I know; let each take his turn."

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[1] "When a man has not what he likes, he must like what he has."

I felt more afraid in his presence than I had ever done; either from having lost the ingenuous confidence of early youth, or from feeling better than ever the difficulty of writing good poetry. I could scarcely prevail upon myself to repeat my "Address to the Poets." He was very well satisfied, and asked if it were known at Paris. I answered, "No." "Then," said he, "you must offer it to the Academy; it will make some noise." I represented that it breathed a freedom of opinion, which would incense a number of persons. "Well," said he, "a respectable lady of my acquaintance acknowledged, that one day after having exclaimed against the insolence of her lover, she had at last unguardedly said, 'delightful insolence'; now the Academy will do the same."

Before dinner he took me to pay some visits at Geneva; and talking of his mode of life with the Genevese, "It is very pleasant," said he, "to live in a country whose sovereigns send and ask for your carriage, that they may come and dine with you."

He kept open house for them; they spent whole days with him; and as the gates of the city were shut at the approach of night, and were not opened till daybreak, those who supped with him were obliged to sleep either at Delices, or in the country-houses which cover the banks of the lake.

On our way I asked him how it happened that Geneva, which had scarcely any territory, and no opportunity of foreign commerce, had become so rich. "By making watches," said he, "by reading your gazettes, and by taking advantage of your follies. These people understand how to calculate the profit on your loans." Talking of Geneva, he asked what I thought of Rousseau. I replied that his writings appeared to me to be only those of an eloquent sophist, and his character that of a pretended cynic, who would burst with pride and rage in his tub if people gave up looking at him. As to the desire which had seized him of assuming this character, I knew how it arose, and told him the story.

"In one of Rousseau's letters to M. de Malesherbes, you recollect how he describes the fit of inspiration and enthusiasm in which he formed the design of declaring himself against the arts and sciences. 'I was going,' says he, in his own account of this miracle, 'I was going to see Diderot, who was then a prisoner at Vincennes; I had in my pocket a *Mercure de France*, which I began to turn over as I passed along. I came to the question proposed by the Academy of Dijon, which gave occasion to my first production. If anything ever resembled sudden inspiration it was the emotion which arose in me on reading this question. Suddenly I felt my mind dazzled with light from a thousand quarters; crowds of bright ideas rushed in at once, with a force and a confusion which threw me into inexpressible disorder. My head was seized with a giddiness resembling intoxication. I was oppressed; my breast heaved with a violent palpitation. No longer able to breathe in a walking posture, I threw myself under a tree in the avenue, where I spent half-an-hour in such a state of agitation that, on rising, I perceived all the fore part of my waistcoat watered with tears, which I had not been conscious of shedding.'"

Here we have an ecstacy eloquently described. The following is the plain fact, such as Diderot told me, and as I related to Voltaire. I shall tell it in the words of Diderot.

"I was," says Diderot, "a prisoner at Vincennes. Rousseau came to see me. He had, according to his own expression, made me his Aristarchus. One day when we were walking together, he told me that the Academy of Dijon had just proposed an interesting question, which he was desirous of treating. This question was 'Has the restoration of the arts and sciences tended to increase purity of morals?' 'Which side will you take?' enquired

I. He replied, 'The affirmative.' 'That,' said I, 'is the asses' bridge; all men of middling talents will follow this path, and you will find it yield only common ideas; whereas the opposite side presents a new and fruitful field of philosophy and eloquence.' 'You are in the right,' said he, after thinking a moment; 'I will follow your advice.'"

"That moment, therefore," continued I, "decided his character, and the mask which he was to assume."

"You do not at all surprise me," said Voltaire; "this man is artificial from head to foot; his mind and soul are wholly artificial. But it is in vain for him to act the stoic and cynic alternately; he will constantly betray himself, and will be suffocated by his own mask."

Of all the Genevese whom I met in his house, the only persons whose society I liked, and who liked mine, were the Chevalier Hubert and Cramer the bookseller. They were both easy in conversation, of a jovial humour, and unaffected wit—a thing rarely met with in their city. Cramer, I was told, could perform tolerably in tragedy; he was the Orosman of Madame Denis, and this talent had procured him the friendship and employment of Voltaire, which last was worth many thousands to him. Hubert's talent was less useful, but, with all its frivolity, was curious and amusing. You would have said that he had eyes at his fingers' ends. With his hands behind his back, he cut out a profile, as like, and even more so than could have been done by the pencil. The figure of Voltaire was so strongly impressed upon his imagination that, whether absent or present, his scissors presented him thinking, writing, going about, and in every possible attitude. I have seen landscapes cut out by him upon leaves of white paper, in which the rules of perspective were observed with wonderful art. These two agreeable Genevese were constant visitors at Delices during the little time I spent there.

M. de Voltaire proposed to show us the castle of

Tornay, at half-a-mile from Geneva, where he kept his theatre. One afternoon we made it the boundary of a ride which he took us in his carriage. Tornay was a small country-seat, a good deal neglected, but which possessed an admirable prospect. In the valley lies the lake of Geneva, having its banks covered with country-seats, and terminated by two large cities; while in the distance lies a chain of mountains, thirty leagues in extent, and Mont Blanc covered with ice and snow which never melt. There I saw the little theatre which was the torment of Rousseau, and in which Voltaire found consolation under his banishment from that of Paris, which was still full of his glory. I was struck with grief and indignation on thinking of this unjust and tyrannical privation. Perhaps he perceived this; for by his observations he more than once answered my thoughts; and on our way home he talked of Versailles, of the long stay I had made there, and of the kindness which Madame de Pompadour formerly expressed for him. "She loves you still," said I; "I have often heard her say so. But she is weak, and either dares not, or cannot do all that she would, for the poor woman is no longer loved; nay, perhaps she envies the lot of Madame Denis, and would gladly come to Delices." "Let her come," said he, with transport, "and act tragedy with us. I will write characters for her, and royal characters. She is handsome, and should be acquainted with the passion of love." "She is acquainted also," said I, "with deep grief and with bitter tears." "So much the better! that is just what we want," exclaimed he, as if delighted to get a new actress; and one would really have thought that he expected her to arrive. "Since she will suit your purpose," said I, "leave it to me; if the theatre of Versailles fail her, I will tell her that yours is open."

The company were diverted by this romantic idea; they overlooked its improbability; and Madame Denis, yielding to the illusion, already besought her uncle that he would not force her to yield her characters to the new actress. He withdrew into his closet for a few hours, and at supper, in the evening, the conversation turning upon kings and their mistresses, Voltaire began comparing the wit and gallantry of the old Court with that of the present, and laid open that rich memory which never forgot anything interesting. From Madame de la Vallière to Madame de Pompadour, the secret history of the two reigns, and of the regency which intervened, passed rapidly before our eyes in the most brilliant and dazzling colours. He reproached himself, however, for robbing l'Ecluse of moments, which, he said, might have been employed by him more agreeably for the company. He begged him to make it up by a few scenes of *The Apple-woman*, and laughed at them like a child.

Next day, which was the last we were to spend together, he sent for me in the morning, and put a manuscript into my hands. "Go into my closet," said he, "and read that; you will then tell me what you think of it." It was the tragedy of *Tancred*, which he had just completed. I read it, and returning with my face bathed in tears, I told him that he had never produced anything more interesting. "To whom," said he, "would you give the character of Amenaide?" "To Clairon," replied I, "to the sublime Clairon; and I can assure you of its meeting with success at least equal to that of *Zara*." "Your tears," replied he, "assure me of what I am most anxious to know; but has nothing appeared to you to interrupt the progress of the story?" "I found no room," said I, "for any other but what you call 'closet criticisms.' An audience will be too much affected to make them." Luckily, he did not speak of the versification; I should then have been under the necessity of disguising my thoughts, for *Tancred* appeared to me greatly inferior, in this respect, to his fine tragedies. In his *Rome Saved*, and in the *Orphan of China*, I had still discovered the beautiful versification of *Zara*, of *Merope*, and of the *Death of Cæsar;* but *Tancred* appeared to show the decline of his poetry. The lines were mean, diffuse, loaded with those redundant words which disguise the want of energy—in a word, the old age of the poet appeared, for in his poetry, as in that of Corneille, versification was the first part which showed symptoms of decay; and after *Tancred*, in which the fire of his genius still threw out some sparks, it was wholly extinguished.

Being distressed at our departure, he was so good as not to deprive us of any part of this last day. The conversation, during our walk, turned upon his desire to see me received into the French Academy; his praise of my "Tales," which formed, he said, his most agreeable reading; and, lastly, my "Examination of Rousseau's Letter to d'Alembert upon Public Places," a refutation which he thought unanswerable, and on which he appeared to set much value. I asked him if Rousseau had succeeded in blinding Geneva with regard to the true motive of this letter. "Rousseau," said he, "is better known at Geneva than at Paris. Nobody here is the dupe either of his pretended zeal or of his false eloquence. His enmity to me is too obvious. Engrossed by a furious pride, he would wish nobody but himself to be talked of in his country. My character throws a shade over his; he envies me the very air that I breathe, and particularly cannot endure, by the amusement I sometimes afford to Geneva, that I should sometimes divert their thoughts from him to myself."

As we were to set out at daybreak, as soon as the gates of the city were opened and horses could be procured, we resolved, along with Madame Denis and MM. Hubert and Cramer, to prolong till that time the pleasure of sitting up and talking together. Voltaire would be of the party, and we in vain urged him to go to bed; he was more awake than we, and read a few more cantos of the "Maid of Orleans." The manner in which he read it was inexpressibly delightful; for though Voltaire, in repeating heroic verses, affected, as I thought, too monotonous a tone and too strong a cadence, no one repeated familiar and humorous verses with such ease, delicacy and grace. His eyes and his smile had an expression which I never observed in any other person. Alas! it was for me the song of the swan, for I was never to see him more till he was about to expire.

At taking leave of each other, we were affected even to tears, but the sorrow was much greater on my side than on his. This was natural; for, independently of my gratitude, and of all the reasons he had given me to love him, I left him in a state of exile.

At Lyons we spent a day with the family of Fleurieu, who waited for me at La Tourette, his country-house. The two following days were spent in seeing the city, and we took a view of all the manufactures, from the formation of gold and silk thread to the perfection of the richest fabrics, which produced the wealth of this flourishing city. The workshops, the town-hall, the fine hospital *de la Charité*, the library of the Jesuits, the convent of the Chartreuse, the theatre, successively drew our attention.

Here I recollect that, when I formerly passed through this city, on my way to Geneva, Mademoiselle Destouche, the manageress of the theatre, desired me to be asked which of my tragedies I should wish to see represented on my return. I was pleased with this attention, but I merely thanked her for it, and asked, on my return, to see that tragedy of Voltaire which her actors performed best. They gave *Alzire*.

While my epicurean philosophy was thus enjoying itself in the provinces, the hatred of my enemies at Paris was not asleep. On my arrival there, I learnt that d'Argental and his wife were circulating a report that I had lost the King's favour, and that, though the

Academy might elect me, His Majesty would refuse his consent. I found my friends much affected by this report, and had I been as impatient to see myself in the Academy as they were, I should have been extremely unhappy. But while I showed them that, in spite of intrigue, I should be able to obtain that place whence my enemies sought to exclude me, I declared that, after all, my pride would be sufficiently gratified by deserving, even though I did not obtain it. I set myself down, then, to finish my translation of "Pharsalia" and my "French Art of Poetry." I offered my "Address to the Poets" to the Academy, and I composed new "Tales" as the editions of the former multiplied.

The success of the "Address to the Poets" was such as Voltaire had foretold; but it was not without difficulty that it carried the prize against two valuable works which came in competition with it—one was the "Address to the People," by Thomas; the other was the Abbé Delille's poem upon the "Advantages of Retirement to Men of Letters." This occurrence in my life was so remarkable that it may deserve to occupy a moment's attention.

Scarce had I offered my poem to the Academy, when Thomas, according to custom, came and showed me that which he was going to send. It appeared to me beautiful, and written in so firm and dignified a tone that I thought it at least very possible that it might be judged superior to mine. "My friend," said I, after having heard and praised it very much, "I, too, have something to entrust to you; but I do it on two conditions—one, that you will observe the most profound secrecy; the other, that after having heard what I am going to tell you, you will make no use of it; that is to say, you will act just as if I had told you nothing. I demand your promise." He gave it. "Now," continued I, "know that I myself have offered a work to the Academy." "In that case," said he, "I withdraw mine." "That is what I will not admit of," replied I, "for two reasons — one, because it is very possible that my work may be rejected as heretical, and that it may be refused the prize; you shall judge of this yourself; the other, because it is not certain that my work is of more value than yours, and I do not wish to rob you of a prize which is, perhaps, your due. I must, therefore, insist on your adhering to the promise you have given. Listen to my poem." He heard it, and allowed that there were bold and dangerous passages. We were, therefore, amicable rivals to each other, and competitors with the Abbé Delille.

One day when the Academy, with the view of bestowing the prize, were examining the pieces presented to them, I met Duclos at the opera, and put some questions to him on this subject. "Do not talk of it," said he; "this competition will, I believe, set the Academy on fire. The prize is disputed by three pieces such as we seldom meet with. There are two whose merit is unquestionable; but the third turns our heads. It is the work of a young madman, full of warmth and boldness, who spares nothing, who braves all literary prejudices, talks of poets as a poet, and with perfect freedom paints them all in their true colours. He dares to praise Lucan and to censure Virgil, to vindicate Tasso from the contempt of Boileau, to pass sentence on Boileau himself, and reduce him to his real value. D'Olivet is furious; he says the Academy is disgraced if it crowns this insolent work; and yet I believe that it will be crowned." It *was* crowned. But, when I appeared to receive the prize, d'Olivet swore that he would never forgive me.

It was about this time, I believe, that I published my translation of "Pharsalia." From that time, my studies were divided between rhetoric and poetry, while my "Tales" stole a few occasional intervals.

The country was particularly favourable to that species of composition, and opportunity sometimes led me to very good subjects. For instance, when I was supping one evening with M. de Saint-Florentin in his country-house at Besons, the conversation turned on my "Tales." "There has happened," said he, "in this village an adventure, out of which you might, perhaps, make something interesting." And in a few words he related that a young peasant and a girl, who was his cousin-german, had fallen in love with each other, and the girl had proved with child; that, as neither the curate nor the rector would allow them to marry, they had recourse to him, and that he had been obliged to procure a dispensation from Rome. I allowed that this subject, properly managed, might possess some degree of interest. At night, when I was alone, it recurred to my mind, and seized upon me so completely that, in an hour, all the images, all the scenes, and even the characters, were drawn, and present, as it were, before my eyes. At this time, that kind of writing cost me no trouble; it flowed spontaneously, and as soon as the tale had been properly planned in my head it was written. Instead of sleeping, I spent the whole night in composing this story. I saw, I heard Annette and Lubin speak as distinctly as if this fiction had been the fresh recollection of what I had seen the evening before. I rose at daybreak, and had then only to throw rapidly upon paper what I had composed; and my tale was written precisely as it is printed.

After dinner, before we went out to walk, the company asked, as they often did in the country, if I had anything to read, and I read "Annette and Lubin." I cannot describe the surprise of the whole party, and particularly the joy of M. de Saint-Florentin at seeing in how short a time I had filled up the picture of which he had given me the sketch. He proposed to send for the real Annette and Lubin, but this I begged to dispense with. However, when a comic opera was written on this tale, the Lubin and Annette of Besons were invited to come and see themselves on the stage. They were present at this spectacle in a box assigned to them, and were very much applauded.

When my imagination was once directed towards this kind of fiction, it became, in the country, a kind of enchantment, which, whenever I was alone, surrounded me with its illusions; sometimes at Malmaison, by the side of a brook, which rolls with a rapid descent from the top of the hill, and, under verdant bowers, takes long windings around the flowery turfs; sometimes at Croix-Fontaine, on those banks watered by the Seine, which there describes an immense semicircle, as if for the very purpose of delighting the eye; sometimes in those beautiful alleys of St. Assise, or on the long terrace which commands the Seine, and from which the eye surveys at a distance the tranquil course of its majestic stream.

The friends whom I went to see in these rural excursions, kindly assumed the appearance of desiring my company and of receiving me with joy. They seemed to think the happy days I spent there as short as I did, and never saw me depart without expressing regret. For my part, I should gladly have united them in one society, or have multiplied myself, so as never to quit any. They bore no resemblance to each other, but each possessed for me its peculiar charm.

Malmaison belonged then to M. Desfourniels; the society I met here was that of Madame Harenc. I have already mentioned the close ties of friendship and gratitude by which my heart was bound to it. The woman who, next to my mother, loved me most dearly, was Madame Harenc. She seemed to have inspired all her friends with the same tender interest in my welfare which she herself felt. To love, and to be loved, in this circle of friends was the constant habit of my life.

At St. Assise, with Madame de Montulé, friendship was not free from reserve and distrust. I was young, and young ladies thought it necessary to be on their guard with me. On my side, the degree of liberty in which I indulged was moderate, and respectfully timid. But there was something even in the restraint which was delicate and pleasing. Besides, I liked the regular life and agreeable attention to every kind of improvement which prevailed at St. Assise. Both father and mother were continually employed in rendering instruction easy and engaging to their children. The former, with his own hand, made for their use a curious selection from the "Memoires de l'Academie de Sciences"; the latter formed an abridgment of the "Natural History" of Buffon, in which she retained only what could be read by them with safety and propriety. There was a governess for the two girls, who taught them history, geography, arithmetic, Italian, and still more carefully the rules of the French language, which she daily employed them in writing correctly. After dinner, all the ladies took up their drawing materials; and this occupation, enlivened by gay sallies, or by agreeable reading, served as their recreation. When we went to walk, M. de Montulé turned the attention of his children to the knowledge of trees and of plants, of which he made them form a kind of herbal, containing an explanation of the nature, the properties and the use of these vegetables. Lastly, even in our sports, ingenious artifices were continually employed to rouse emulation, and render them useful, as well as agreeable, by insinuating instruction in the form of amusement. Such was the picture presented to me by this domestic school, in which study never wore the appearance of restraint, nor instruction that of severity.

You may well suppose that a father and mother who instructed their children so carefully were themselves very well informed. M. de Montulé did not study to be agreeable, and gave himself little trouble upon that head; but Madame de Montulé had in her mind and character a tincture of decent coquetry, which, when joined to decorum, renders the agreeable qualities of a woman more brilliant and alluring. She called me a philosopher, fully persuaded that I had very little of that character; and to laugh at my philosophy was one of her pastimes. I perceived it, but I allowed her to indulge that pleasure.

The worthy and plain Madame de Chalut, with still greater cordiality, drew me to St. Cloud; and she retained me there by the irresistible charm of a friendship which led her to open her whole heart to me, and to pour into mine, without reserve, her most secret thoughts and her dearest interests. She, indeed, was not necessary to my happiness, but I was necessary to hers. Her soul had need of mine to rest upon, and thus to relieve itself from the weight of her sorrows. She had one, the horror of which is inexpressible; she saw her old master and mistress, her benefactors, her friends, the Dauphin and Dauphiness, struck at once by an invisible hand, and consumed by what she called a slow poison, waste away and die.[1] It was to me that she expressed her anguish on account of this slow death. She added other secrets, which were disclosed to me alone, and which will follow me to the silence of the tomb.

But of all the rural retreats in which I successively spent the fine seasons of the year, Maisons and Croix-Fontaine were the most attractive. I took only short excursions to Croix-Fontaine; but there Bouret, like an enchanter, assembled every kind of voluptuous luxury, every refinement of the most ingenious and delicate gallantry. He was allowed to be the most obliging and magnificent of men; people could talk of nothing but the graceful manner in which he conferred an obligation. Alas! you will soon see the abyss of misfortune into which he was drawn by this amiable and fatal propensity. However, as he possessed two great offices in the finance, that of farmer-general and farmer of the posts; as his connections and his couriers afforded him, besides, the means of procuring for his table everything most exquisite and rare that the kingdom produced, and as he was constantly receiving presents from those whose fortunes he had made, his friends viewed his profusion only as the effect of his credit and the use he was making of his wealth.

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[1] See note (23) at the end.

But Madame Gaulard, who probably took a deeper and sounder view than I of the affairs of her friend, and who was grieved at the expenses in which his fortune was dissipated, not choosing that she should afford either an occasion or a pretext for them, had taken at Maisons, on the road to Croix-Fontaine, a plain and modest house, where she lived without any company, having with her only a niece, of an agreeable character, with all the gaiety of fifteen years. I have drawn the character of Madame Gaulard in one of my tales, "De la Veillée," into which I have introduced myself under the name of Ariste. The simplicity, mildness and peaceful equality of her character had suited itself so readily to mine, that scarce had she become acquainted with me at Paris and at Croix-Fontaine, than she became desirous of my intimate friendship in her retreat at Maisons; and by degrees I, myself, found it so agreeable that at last I made it my residence, not only during summer but for whole winters, when she preferred the silence and repose of the country to the noise and tumult of the city. How delightful was this solitude to me! The reader suspects the cause, and I should make no secret of it; for nothing could be more legitimate than my views and intentions. But, as they were not crowned with success, it remains only as one of those dreams whose recollection is interesting only to the person through whose mind they have passed. It is enough to know that this peaceful retreat was that in which my days flowed on most rapidly and smoothly.

While I thus forgot both the world and the Academy, while I forgot even myself, my friends, who thought literary honours usurped by all those who obtained them before me, were impatient when they saw in one year four new vacant places, of which I was always disappointed. But I felt no emotion; while, at every new election, my enemies, besieging the gates of the Academy, redoubled their efforts to keep me at a distance.

Talking of the parody of "Cinna," I forgot to mention that there was a word which provoked the Count de Choiseul-Praslin, then ambassador at Vienna. Augustus, you know, said to Cinna and Maximus:

"Vous qui me tenez lieu d'Agrippe et de Mecene."[1]

This line was thus parodied:

"Vous qui me tenez lieu du merle et de ma femme."[2]

Now, this title of the blackbird was a nickname given to the Count de Praslin. When, therefore, he had taken La Dangeville for his mistress, Grandval, who preceded him, and whom she wished to retain as an auxiliary, replied:

"Le merle a trop souillé la cage,
Le moineau n'y veut plus entrer."[3]

This line of the parody, therefore—

"Vous qui me tenez lieu du merle et de ma femme."[2]

—had been represented to the Duke de Choiseul as one of my crimes, and in our conference he mentioned it as an insult offered to his cousin. I was so weak as to answer that this was not one of the lines which I had got. "And pray, then," asked he, urgently, "what was the line which you got?" I answered, to get out of the scrape:

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[1] "You who supply to me the place of Agrippa and of Mecenas."

[2] "You who supply to me the place of the blackbird and of my wife."

[3] "The blackbird has too much sullied the cage; the sparrow will enter it no more."

> "Vous qui me tenez lieu de ma defunte femme,"[1]

"Fie!" exclaimed he, "that is a poor line; the other is far better! there is no comparison." Praslin was not a man to take the matter so lightly. He had a mean and gloomy soul; and in men of this character, wounded pride is inexorable.

On his return from his embassy, he was made minister of state for foreign affairs. Then, like a profound politician, he held a council with d'Argental and his wife upon the means of barring, at least for some time longer, my entrance into the Academy.

Thomas gained the prizes of eloquence, with a great superiority over all his rivals. They determined to make him my opponent; and, with that view, the Count de Praslin began with attaching him to himself, by making him his secretary, and by procuring him his appointment of Swiss interpreter. He thus assumed the honourable appearance of protecting a man of merit. The littleness of the vengeance which they were planning against me seemed to be adorned and ennobled; and they waited only for the proper time for bringing forward Thomas, in order to shut against me the path to the Academy.

Meanwhile, my friends and myself, while we rejoiced at any good thing which happened to Thomas, were contriving how to remove the obstacle, which, in the opinion of the academicians, opposed my election. "They will never dare," said d'Alembert, "to elect you so long as they believe that you will be rejected by the King. D'Argental, Praslin and the Duke d'Aumont represent this rejection as certain. You must absolutely destroy the credit of this report."

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[1] "You who supply to me the place of my deceased wife."

Having recovered my favour with Madame de Pompadour, I disclosed to her my trouble, and begged her to ask the King if he would be favourable. She was so kind as to ask him; and his answer was, that if I should be elected, he would give his consent. "Then, madam," said I, "I may assure the Academy of this?" "No," said she, "no; you might thereby commit me; you must just say that you have reason to hope for the King's consent." "But, madam," urged I, "if the King has positively said——" "I know," replied she, with warmth, "what the King has said, but do I know what those about him will make him say?" These words closed my lips; and I came and gave d'Alembert this melancholy account of what had passed.

After he had vented his rage against weak minds, we determined that I should content myself with declaring my hopes, in a manner, however, which might make it be understood that they were well-founded; and, accordingly, the death of Marivaux, in 1763, having left a vacant place, I paid the accustomed visits like a man who had nothing to fear from the Court. Yet I was distressed about this anxiety of Madame de Pompadour, as to what the King might be made to say. I endeavoured to contrive some means of securing him, and thought I had found one, but at present it was impossible to employ it. My "Art of Poetry" was the instrument I meant to make use of, but, though it was printing, some months must still elapse before it could be published. Luckily, the Abbé de Radonvilliers, formerly sub-preceptor to the royal family, offered himself, at the same time with me, as a candidate for the vacant place, and, by yielding this place to him, I was doing an agreeable thing to the Dauphin — perhaps to the King himself. I went to Versailles, therefore, and informed my competitor of my resolution to withdraw. Here I had little merit, for he would have prevailed; yet such was his modesty, that he expressed gratitude for this step, as if he had been indebted to me alone for the union of all the votes in his favour.

A very remarkable occurrence at this election was the artifice employed by my enemies, and by those of d'Alembert and Duclos, in order to render us odious in the eyes of the Dauphin. They had begun with spreading a report that my party would oppose the Abbé Radonvilliers, and that if he had a majority on the first scrutiny, he would not, in the second, at least, escape the affront of black balls. Having made this prediction, the next point was to verify it; and the scheme they fell upon was the following. The Academy contained four members who went by the name of philosophers, an appellation which was then odious. The academicians thus designated were Duclos, d'Alembert, Saurin and Watelet. The worthy leaders of the opposite party, d'Olivet, Batteux, and probably Paulmi and Seguier, treacherously formed the design of themselves throwing in black balls, the blame of which would fall on the philosophers; and accordingly four black balls were found in the ballot.

Those who had thrown them in broke out into loud murmurs of astonishment; and the rogues, fixing their eyes upon the four, to whom the suspicion attached, loudly exclaimed how strange it was that a man so blameless and so estimable as the Abbé de Radonvilliers, should be affronted with four black balls. The Abbé d'Olivet was quite indignant at so shameful, so crying a disgrace; the four philosophers looked very much confounded; but the tables were soon turned in their favour, and to the disgrace of their enemies. This turn was given in the following manner. The Academy, when they elected by ballot, were accustomed to distribute two balls, a black and a white, among each of the electors. The box into which they let them drop had also two capsules, and, above these, two cups, one black and the other white. Those who meant to favour the candidate, put the white ball into the white cup, and the black into the black; and when they were against him, they put the white ball into the black cup, and the black into the white. Thus, when the ballot was examined, the whole number of balls ought to be found, with as many white balls in the black capsule, as there were black in the white.

Now Duclos, one of the philosophers, having, by a kind of divination, foreseen the trick that was to be played upon them, had said to his companions, "Let us keep our black balls in our hands, so that if these scoundrels are so ill-natured as to throw them in, we may be able to produce a proof that the balls were not put in by us." Having, therefore, allowed d'Olivet and the other rogues to murmur for some time against the evil-disposed, Duclos opened his hand and said, "It is not I who threw in the black ball, for luckily I have kept mine, and here it is." "Neither is it I," said d'Alembert, "for here is mine." Watelet and Saurin said and did the same thing. At this unexpected blow, the confusion was thrown back upon the authors of the trick. D'Olivet was so simple as to accuse them of unfairness in having parried his blow by keeping their black balls, alleging the laws of the Academy with regard to the inviolable secrecy of the ballot. "M. l'Abbé," said d'Alembert, "self-defence is the first of laws, and we had no other means of obviating the suspicion which was intended to be thrown upon us."

This mark of foresight on the part of Duclos became generally known, while the d'Olivets, and the manner in which they had been taken in the snare, were laughed at by the whole Court.

The printing of my "Art of Poetry" being at last completed, I besought Madame de Pompadour to obtain permission from the King that a work which filled up a blank in our literature should be presented to him. "This," said I, "is a favour which will cost neither the King nor the State anything, and which will prove that the King is well inclined towards me." I owe this testimony to the memory of this beneficent woman, that, on hearing this easy and simple mode of publicly determining the King in my favour, her fine countenance sparkled with joy. "Willingly," said she, "will I ask this favour from the King, and I shall obtain it." She obtained it without difficulty, and said, when she announced it, "You must give this presentation every possible solemnity; all the royal family and all the ministers must, on the same day, receive the work from your own hand."

I disclosed this secret only to my intimate friends; and, having got my copies very magnificently bound (for I spared no cost on them), I went one Saturday evening to Versailles with my packet. As soon as I arrived, I begged, through Quesnai, that Madame de Pompadour would dispose the King to give me a favourable reception.

Next day I was introduced by the Duke de Duras. The King was at his levee, and never did I see him look so handsome. He received my homage with an enchanting look. My joy would have been at its height had he just spoken three words, but his eyes spoke for him. The Dauphin, who had been prepossessed in my favour by the Abbé de Radonvilliers, was so good as to speak to me. "I have heard very favourable accounts of this work," said he; "I think highly of the author." While saying these words he wrung my heart with sorrow, for I saw death in his countenance and in his eyes.

During the whole of this ceremony the worthy Duke de Duras was my guide, and I cannot describe the warmth with which he interested himself in procuring me a good reception.

When I went to call on Madame de Pompadour, to whom I had already presented my work, she said, "Go to M. de Choiseul and offer him his copy; you will meet a friendly reception. Leave that of M. de Praslin with me; I will present it myself."

After my expedition, I went immediately and informed d'Alembert and Duclos of the success I had met with. I had distributed copies to such of the academicians as I knew to be my friends. Mairan said that this work was a mine, which I had laid under the door of the Academy in order to blow it up, in case it was shut against me; but all my difficulties were not yet got over.

Duclos and d'Alembert had, in the presence of the whole Academy, got into some altercation or other, on the subject of the King of Prussia and the Cardinal de Bernis: they had quarrelled to such a degree that they were no longer on speaking terms; so that, at the moment when their union and good understanding would be necessary to me, I found them enemies to each other. Duclos, the more blunt of the two, but the least passionate, was also the least offended. The enmity of such a man as d'Alembert was painful to him; he was anxious to be reconciled, but he wished me to prevail on d'Alembert to make the first advances.

"I am quite indignant," said he, "at the oppression under which you have groaned, and at the mean and secret persecution which you still experience. It is time to put an end to it. Bougainville is dying; you must have his place. Say to d'Alembert that I am most desirous of securing it to you; let him just speak to me on the subject at the Academy; we will arrange our matters for next election."

D'Alembert broke into a furious passion when I proposed that he should speak to Duclos. "Let him go to the devil," said he, "with his Abbé de Bernis! I will have nothing more to do with either the one or the other." "In that case," said I, "I give up all thoughts of the Academy; I only regret having ever entertained any." "How so?" replied he, with warmth; "cannot you procure admission without the aid of Duclos?" "And is there anyone whose aid would be superfluous, when my friends abandon me, and when my enemies are more eager and active than ever in their attempts to injure me? They, alas! would speak to the devil himself, were it to deprive me of a single vote; but I experience myself, what I formerly said in verse—

'L'amitié se rebute, et le malheur le glace;
La haine est implacable, et jamais ne se lasse.'"[1]

"You shall be admitted a member, in spite of your enemies," replied he. "No, sir, no; I shall not, I will not; I should be hooted at, supplanted, and insulted by a party who are already too numerous and too powerful. I choose rather to live in obscurity; and for that purpose, thank heaven, I shall need no one's assistance." "But, Marmontel, you are angry; I know not why——" "But I know it well; the friend of my heart, the man in the world on whom I depend most, has only two words to say in order to deliver me from oppression——" "Well, well, I will say them, but nothing in my life ever cost me so much." "Has Duclos, then, injured you so very grievously?" "How! do you not, then, know the insolence with which, at a meeting of the Academy, he spoke of the King of Prussia?" "Of the King of Prussia! and how is that King affected by the insolence of Duclos? Ah! d'Alembert, if you only needed the vote of my most cruel enemy, if my forgiveness were sufficient to secure it, I would go immediately and take him in my arms." "Come," said he, "this very evening I am reconciled with Duclos; but he must serve you well; for it is only to that end, and out of love to you——" "He will serve me well," said I; and accordingly, Duclos, delighted to see d'Alembert again his friend, made as warm exertions in my favour as himself.

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[1] "Friendship is liable to take offence, and is frozen by misfortune; hatred is implacable, and never tires."

But, at the death of Bougainville, and at the time when I was hoping to meet with no further obstacle, d'Alembert sent for me. "Do you know," said he, "the plot that is hatching? A rival is opposed to you, in whose favour Praslin, d'Argental and his wife are soliciting votes both at city and Court. They boast of having procured a very great number, and I am afraid of it, for this rival is Thomas." "I do not believe," said I, "that Thomas would become an accomplice in such a transaction." "But," said he, "Thomas is very much embarrassed. They have entangled him, you know, by favours and by calls on his gratitude; then they have been long urging him to think of the Academy; and upon his observing to them that his character of private secretary would form an obstacle to his election, Praslin has obtained from the King a patent ennobling his place. Now that the obstacle is removed, they call upon him to present himself, and assure him of a great majority. He is at Fontainebleau with his minister, where he is beset by d'Argental. I advise you to go and call upon him."

I set out; and on my arrival I wrote to Thomas, and asked him to appoint a place of meeting. He replied that at five o'clock he would be on the banks of the great canal. I waited there for him, and when he came, said, "You must suspect, my friend, what is the subject on which I wish to converse with you. I come to know if what I am told be true," and I repeated to him what d'Alembert had said.

"This is all true," replied Thomas; "and it is true also that M. d'Argental has this morning notified to me that M. de Praslin wishes me to offer myself; that he requires it of me as a proof of attachment, urging that such was the condition on which I received my office; that when I accepted it I must have understood the reason for which it was granted, and that, if I fail in duty to my benefactor, out of regard to a man who has offended him, I lose my place and my fortune. Such is my situation. Now, tell me what you would do in my place." "Are you really serious," said I, "in asking my advice?" "Yes," said he, smiling like a man who had formed his resolution. "Well," said I, "in your place, I would do the very thing that you will do." "No, say plainly, what would you do?" "I do not pretend," said I, "to set myself up as an example; but am I not your friend, and are you not mine?" "Yes," said he; "I do not conceal it:

> 'Je l'ai dit à la terre, au ciel, à Gusman même.'"[1]

"Well," resumed I, "if I had a son, and if he were so unfortunate as to serve a Gusman against his friend, I——" "Say no more," said Thomas, squeezing my hand; "my answer is made, and well made too." "Ah! my friend," said I, "do you suppose I could ever doubt it?" "Yet you came to make yourself sure of it," said he, with a mild reproach. "No, certainly," replied I; "it is not for myself that I wish the assurance, but for men who do not know your soul as well as I do." "Tell them," replied he, "that if ever I enter the Academy, it shall be by the gate of honour. And with regard to fortune, I have enjoyed it so short a time and have wanted it so long that I hope I have not lost the power of again doing without it." I was so affected by these words that I would have yielded the place to him, if he would have accepted it, or could have done so with decency. But the hatred of his patron against me was so openly declared that we should have been considered, he as the tool of this hatred, and I as having sunk under it. We adhered, therefore, to the open and frank behaviour which became us both. He did not offer himself as a candidate, and he lost his place of secretary to the minister. Their impudence, however, did not go so far as to deprive him of that of Swiss interpreter. He was the next person after me that was received into the Academy, and he was received with acclamation, but after a long interval; for from 1763 to 1766 there was no vacant place, though, in general, the number of deaths was three in two years.

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[1] "I have said it to earth, to heaven, to Gusman himself."

I must say, to the shame of the Count de Praslin, and to the glory of Thomas, that the latter, after refusing to be guilty of an act of mean submission, thought it his duty not to withdraw from a man to whom he had been obliged, till he should receive his dismissal. He continued to attend him another month, going as usual every morning to his levee, while this harsh and vain man never spoke a word, nor even deigned to look at him. In a mind naturally lofty and proud, like that of Thomas, you may suppose how painful this humble attendance must have been. At last, after paying to gratitude more than he owed, seeing how irreconcilable the vile pride of this minister was with modest and patient civility, he let him know that he saw himself under the necessity of taking his silence for a dismissal, and withdrew. This conduct made his character completely known; and he lost nothing, even in point of fortune, by having acted like an honest man. The King was pleased with it; and he not only obtained afterwards a pension of a hundred louis on the Treasury, but handsome apartments in the Louvre, which were given him by the Count d'Angiviller, his friend and mine.

You have just seen, my children, the number of difficulties which I had to encounter before reaching the Academy. But I have not mentioned some thorns with which my path was strewed by poetical vanity.

Madame Geoffrin was very uneasy on account of the opposition which I experienced; she sometimes talked of it with affected raillery, but with evident vexation; and at every new election which removed mine to a distance, I saw that her anger was raised. "Well," said she, "so it is determined you are not to be a member." Not wishing that she should be troubled about it, I carelessly answered, that it was the least of my anxieties; that the author of the *Henriade*, of *Zara*, of *Merope*, had been past fifty before he was admitted; that I was not forty; that I might, perhaps, one day be a member; but that, after all, a number of worthy men of distinguished merit comforted themselves, although excluded, and that I might do the same. I begged her not to be more anxious about it than I was. She was not less anxious; and from time to time, by little words in her own way, she sounded the dispositions of the academicians.

One day she asked me, "What has M. de Marivaux done, that you should laugh at him and turn him into ridicule?" "I, madam?" "Yes, you yourself laugh in his face, and make others laugh at his expense——" "Really, madam, I know not what you mean." "I mean just to tell you what he said; Marivaux is an honest man who cannot have imposed upon me." "Then he himself will explain what I do not understand. For never in my life has he, either present or absent, been the object of my raillery." "Well," said she, "see him, and try if you can undeceive him, for, even in his complaints, he talks of you in a friendly manner."

As I was crossing the garden of the Palais Royal, in which he lodged, I met and accosted him. He showed at first some repugnance to explain himself; and repeated that he would still do me justice in the affair of the Academy. "Sir," said I at last, somewhat hastily, "let us drop the Academy; it is not with a view to it that I take this step; it is not your vote which I solicit, it is your esteem which I demand, and of which I am jealous." "You have it wholly," said he. "If so, then be so good as to say what ground I have given for the complaints which you make against me." "What!" said he, "have you forgotten that one evening, at the house of Madame Dubocage, when you sat by Madame de Villaumont, you were both constantly looking at me, whispering and laughing. It was, undoubtedly, at me that you laughed, and I know not why, for I was not more ridiculous that day than usual."

"Luckily," said I, "what you mention is full in my recollection; the fact is, it was the first time that Madame de Villaumont had seen you, and, as a circle was forming round you, she asked who you were. I told her your name. She happened to know an officer of the same name in the French guards, and maintained that you were not M. de Marivaux. I was diverted with her obstinacy and she with mine; and while describing the figure of the Marivaux whom she knew, she looked at you—that is the whole secret." "Ay," said he, ironically, "it was, to be sure, a most laughable mistake! but you had both a kind of ill-natured and bantering look, which I know perfectly, and which is very different from that of mere gaiety." "Yet ours, I swear to you, was quite simple and quite innocent. In short," continued I, "I have told you the plain truth. I thought this my duty, and I have done it; if you do not believe me, it will be my turn, sir, to complain of you." He assured me that he believed what I said; yet he did not the less say to Madame Geoffrin, that he had understood this explanation only as a skilful mode of excusing myself. Death deprived me of his vote; but if he had given it, he would have thought himself doing a generous action.

Madame de Villaumont, of whom I have spoken, was daughter to Madame Gaulard, and the rival of Madame de Brionne in beauty—nay, she was even more lively and animated.

Madame Dubocage,[1] with whom we sometimes supped, was a literary woman, whose character was respectable, but destitute of variety and animation. She, like Madame Geoffrin, had a literary society, but infinitely less agreeable, and suited to her mild, cold, polite and dull humour. I had belonged to it for some time, but it was too serious for me, and I was banished by *ennui*. In this woman, who possessed a momentary celebrity, the thing truly admirable was her modesty. She saw engraved at the foot of her portrait, "*forma Venus, arte Minerva*"; yet no one ever detected in her the least symptom of vanity. Let me return to the complaints made upon me by persons of a different character.

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[1] See note (24) at the end.

Among the academicians whose votes were not secured, we numbered the President Henault,[1] and Moncrif.[2] Madame Geoffrin spoke to them, and came back to me in a passion. "Is it possible," said she, "that you should spend your life in raising yourself up enemies? Here is Moncrif furious against you, while the President Henault is not much less irritated." "On what account, madam? What have I done?" "What have you done? Why, you have written your 'Art of Poetry'; for you will always be writing books." "And what is there in this book that they are angry at?" "I know, as to Moncrif," says she; "he makes it no secret, but declares it aloud. You quote one of his songs in a mutilated state. It contained five couplets, and you quote only three." "Alas! madam, I quoted the best, and kept back only those which repeated the same idea." "The very thing he complains of—you attempted to correct his work. He will never forgive you in life or death." "Then, madam, let him live and die my enemy, on account of the two couplets of his song; I will submit to my disgrace. But what is my offence against the honest President?" "He did not say; but he too, I believe, complains of your book. I will learn it." She did learn it. But when I urged her to tell it me, a diverting scene took place, of which the Abbé Raynal was a witness.

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[1] See note (25) at the end.

[2] See note (26) at the end

"Well, madam, you have seen the President Henault? Has he told you, at last, what injury I have done him?" "Yes, I know it, but he forgives you; he is willing even to forget it; let no more be said on the subject." "At least, madam, I ought to know what this involuntary crime is which he is so kind as to forget." "There is no occasion at all for your knowing it. You will have his vote, and that is enough." "No, it is not enough; and I am not a man to endure accusations without knowing the subject." "Madam," said Raynal, "M. Marmontel seems to me in the right." "Don't you see," replied she, "that he wishes to know it only that he may turn it into ridicule, and make a story of it." "No, madam, I promise to keep silence as soon as I know what it is." "What it is! why, still your book, and your rage for quotation. Is not the book there?" "Yes, madam, it is." "Let me see that song of the President's which you have quoted, on the subject of drinking songs. Here it is:

'Venge moi d'une ingrate maîtresse,' &c.[1]

Who gave you this song?" "Geliote." "Well, since you will have it, Geliote did not give you a correct copy. There is an 'oh' which you have suppressed." "An 'oh!' madam." "Yes, an 'oh.' Is there not a line which says, 'Que d'attraits!'" "Yes, madam:

'Que d'attraits! dieux! qu'elle etoit belle.'"[2]

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[1] "Avenge me on a mistress that's false," &c.

[2] "What charms! heavens! how lovely she was."

"Now, there lies the fault. You should have said:

'Oh dieux! qu'elle etoit belle'"[1]

"But, madam, the sense is the same." "Yes, sir; but when you quote, you should quote faithfully. Every man is jealous of what he has written; and it is natural he should be. The President did not ask you to quote his song." "I quoted it with praise." "Then you should have made no alteration. Since he made it 'oh dieux,' he must have liked that better. What injury had he done to you, that you should deprive him of his 'oh'? After all, he has assured me that this will not hinder him from doing justice to your talents."

Both the Abbé Raynal and myself had the greatest desire to burst out laughing. But we suppressed our mirth, for Madame Geoffrin was already a good deal confused, and when she was in the wrong it was a very serious matter.

As we went away, I mentioned to the abbé my adventure with Marivaux and my quarrel with Moncrif. "Ah!" said he, "this proves that when you hear of a man having enemies you should examine well, before passing sentence, whether or not he has deserved them."

After this storm was over, my life resumed its easy and tranquil course. In the first place, it was divided between town and country. I was happy in both. Of my societies in town, the only one to which I was no longer attached was that of the *Menus Plaisirs*. Cury, who had been the soul of it, was debilitated and ruined. He died shortly after.

When his secret became known, which was not till after his death, I have sometimes heard it said in company that he ought to have declared himself as the author of the parody. I have always maintained that he ought not; and woe to me if he had, for the oppression would then have fallen upon him, and I should have died of grief. The fault was mine, and it would have been supremely unjust that another should have suffered the punishment. After all, the parody, full of gross abuse, which was generally circulated, was very different from that which he had written. While accusing himself of the one, therefore, he must have disavowed the other; and though he should have made this distinction, would he have been listened to? He would have been ruined, and through my fault; by keeping silence, he did what was most just and best to be done both for him and myself; and I was indebted to him for the pleasures of the life which I have led since; my fortunate disgrace had restored me to myself and my friends. I do not number among my private societies the assembly which was held in the evening at the house of Mademoiselle l'Espinasse; for, with the exception of some friends of d'Alembert, as the Chevalier de Chastellux, the Abbé Morellet, Saint-Lambert, and myself, this circle was composed of persons who had no connection together. She had collected them out of a variety of different societies, but had suited them so well together that when they met they appeared to be in harmony, like the strings of an instrument tuned by a skilful hand. Pursuing the comparison, I may say that she played on this instrument with an art which bordered on genius; she seemed to know the sound that would be yielded by the string she was about to touch; that is to say, our mind and character were so fully known to her, that a word was sufficient to bring them into action. Nowhere was conversation more lively, more brilliant, or under better regulation. There was something most singular in that degree of tempered and constantly equal warmth which she was able to maintain by sometimes moderating and sometimes enlivening it. The continual activity of her mind was communicated to ours, but in a measured degree; her imagination moved, her reason restrained it.

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[1] "Oh heavens! how lovely she was."

And you may observe that the minds which she moved at pleasure were neither weak nor superficial; the Condillacs and the Turgots were of the number; d'Alembert beside her was like a simple and docile child. Her power of throwing out a thought and giving it to be canvassed by men of this class; the power of discussing it herself, like them, with precision, and sometimes with eloquence; the power of varying the conversation by the introduction of new ideas; and all with the ease of a fairy, who, by the stroke of a wand, changes at pleasure the scene of her enchantments—these, I say, were not the powers of an ordinary woman. It was not with the trifles of fashion and vanity that she was able, during a daily conversation of four hours, to render herself interesting to a circle of intelligent men. One of her charms, it is true, was that warmth of character and language which gave to her opinions the glow, the eloquence, the interest of feeling. Often, too, in her society—nay, very often—reason assumed a gay aspect; a mild philosophy indulged in sportive pleasantry; d'Alembert gave the tone; and who ever knew better than he—

> " —— happily to steer
> From gay to grave, from lively to severe?"

You must be curious, my children, to learn the history of a person so singularly accomplished as Mademoiselle l'Espinasse. It will not be long.

There was at Paris a Marchioness du Defant, a woman equally full of wit and ill-nature. In her youth she was rather handsome and fond of gallantry; but by the time I am speaking of she was old, almost blind, and eaten up with vapours and *ennui*. Though retired in a convent, with a narrow fortune, she continued still to see the fashionable society among whom she had formerly lived. She had become acquainted with d'Alembert at the house of her old lover, the President Henault, over whom she still tyrannised, and who, being naturally very timid, had continued the slave of fear long after throwing off the chains of love. Madame du Defant, delighted with the wit and gaiety of d'Alembert, had invited him to her house, and had taken such complete possession of him that he was inseparable from her. He lodged at a distance; yet he never spent a day without going to see her.

Meanwhile, Madame du Defant, with the view of filling up the vacant hours of her solitude, was looking out for a well-educated young person, who, having no fortune, would agree to be her companion, and who would live with her in her convent, as a friend; that is to say, as a humble attendant; she met with Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, and was delighted with her, as you may well suppose. D'Alembert was no less delighted to find with his old friend so interesting a third person. Misfortune had placed between this young lady and him an affinity, which tended to draw their souls nearer. They were both natural children. I saw their rising friendship when Madame du Defant used to bring them with her to sup at my friend Madame Harenc's; for our acquaintance went back thus far. Nothing less than such a friend as d'Alembert was necessary to soothe and render tolerable the sad and severe situation of Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, for, not only was she subjected to a perpetual attendance upon a blind and vapourish woman, but, in order to live with her, it was necessary, like her, to turn night into day, and day into night; to watch by her bedside and lull her to sleep with reading—an employment which proved fatal to this young girl, who was naturally delicate, and whose lungs were so injured by the fatigue that they never recovered. She continued with her, however, till an event happened which broke her chain.

Madame du Defant, after sitting up all night in her own house, or in that of Madame de Luxembourg, who was equally fond of watching, spent the whole day in sleep, and did not appear till about six in the evening. Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, after retiring to her small room, which looked into the court of the same convent, rose little more than an hour before her; but this precious hour, in which she was free from slavery, was spent in receiving her personal friends, d'Alembert, Chastellux, Turgot, and myself, occasionally. Now these gentlemen composed also the habitual society of Madame du Defant; but they amused themselves with Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, and these were moments of which the former was deprived; accordingly, this private rendezvous was kept secret from her, for her jealousy was well foreseen. But she made the discovery, and talked of it as nothing less than treason. She exclaimed loudly against this girl, accusing her of carrying off her friends, and declaring that she would no longer nourish a serpent in her bosom.

Their separation was sudden; but Mademoiselle l'Espinasse was not abandoned. All the friends of Madame du Defant had become hers. It was easy to convince them that the anger of this woman was unjust. The President Henault himself declared in her favour. The Duchess of Luxembourg threw the blame on her own friend, and presented Mademoiselle l'Espinasse with a complete set of furniture in the lodging which she took. Lastly, her friends, through the interest of the Duke de Choiseul, procured an annual pension, which placed her above want; and the most distinguished circles of Paris vied with each other for the happiness of possessing her.

D'Alembert, to whom Madame du Defant imperiously proposed the alternative of breaking with Mademoiselle l'Espinasse or with her, made no hesitation in devoting himself entirely to his young friend. They lived at a distance from each other, and, though in bad weather it was painful for d'Alembert to return in the evening from Rue Belle-Chasse to Rue Michael-Comte, in which his nurse lodged, he never thought of quitting the latter.

But he there fell so dangerously ill as to alarm Bouvart, his physician. His illness was one of those putrid fevers, the best remedy for which is a clear and pure air. Now, his lodging at his glazier's was a little room, ill-lighted, with a very close and small bed. Bouvart declared to us that the inconveniences he suffered in this lodging might be fatal to him. Watelet offered him one in his hotel near the Boulevard du Temple; he was transported thither; and Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, whatever might be thought or said, made herself his sick nurse. No person either thought or said anything but what was good.

D'Alembert was restored to life, and, being desirous from that time of consecrating his days to her who had taken such care of them, he expressed a wish to lodge in the same house. Nothing could be more innocent than their intimacy; accordingly it was respected, and the high character which Mademoiselle l'Espinasse enjoyed, far from being in the least impaired, was only placed on a more elevated and more honourable footing. But however pure this union was, and however tender and unalterable it always continued on the side of d'Alembert, it was not to him so pleasing or so happy as it ought to have been.

The ardent soul and romantic imagination of Mademoiselle l'Espinasse led her to form the design of rising above her narrow circumstances, to grow old in which appeared to her terrible. It appeared to her possible that, considering all the powers of seducing and pleasing which she possessed, even without being beautiful, someone, even of her most distinguished friends, might become so fond of her as to wish to marry her. This ambitious hope, though more than once disappointed, was never relinquished; though the object was changed, it always rose higher, and was so ardent that it might have been taken for the enthusiasm of love. For instance, she was once so distractedly fond of what she called the heroism and the genius of Guibert, that she saw nothing comparable to him, either in the military art or the art of writing. He, however, escaped her like the rest. She then thought she might aspire to the conquest of the Marquis de Mora, a young Spaniard of high birth; and really, whether it was love or mere enthusiasm, this young man had conceived a passionate attachment to her. We saw him more than once on his knees before her; and the impression which she had made on this Spaniard assumed so serious an aspect, that the family of the Marquis were in haste to recall him. Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, thwarted in her wishes, no longer behaved in the same manner towards d'Alembert; and he experienced not only coldness, but often ill-humour, mixed with a great deal of bitterness and asperity. He dissembled his sorrows, and lamented over them with me only. Poor man! so devoted was his submission to her, that, in the absence of M. de Mora, he was the person who went in the morning to the post-office to enquire after her letters, and brought them to her when she awoke. At last, the young Spaniard having fallen ill in his own country, and his family having a suitable marriage in view for him as soon as he should recover, Mademoiselle l'Espinasse conceived the design of getting a physician at Paris to pronounce that the climate of Spain would be fatal to him, and that his life could be saved only by sending him to breathe the air of France. This opinion, dictated by Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, was obtained by d'Alembert from Lorry, his intimate friend, and one of the most celebrated physicians in Paris. The authority of Lorry, supported by the patient, produced in Spain its full effect. The young man was allowed to set out; he died on the road; and the deep affliction which this event caused to Mademoiselle l'Espinasse completed the destruction of that frail machine which her soul had undermined, and brought her to the tomb.

D'Alembert was inconsolable for this loss. Then it was that he came and buried himself, as it were, in the lodging which he had at the Louvre. He often lamented to me the fatal solitude into which he thought himselt fallen. In vain did I remind him of what he himself had so often told me—the change in her affection. "Yes," replied he, "she was changed, but I was not; she lived no longer for me, but I lived always for her. Since she is no more, I no longer know why I live. Ah! would I had still to suffer those moments of bitterness, which she so well knew how to soften and to banish from my recollection! Do you remember the happy evenings we used to spend together? Of all this, what now remains? Instead of her, when I return home, I find only her shadow. This lodging in the Louvre is itself a tomb, into which I never enter but with dread."

I give here the substance of the conversations which we had together, as we walked along in the evenings to the Tuileries; and I ask if this be the language of a man to whom Nature had denied a feeling heart?

I was much happier than he, for I lived among the most captivating women, without being attached to any by the chains of slavery. Neither the lively and handsome Filleul, nor the ingenuous and beautiful Seran, nor the dazzling Villaumont, nor any of those in whose society I took the greatest pleasure, interrupted my repose. As I knew well that they had no thoughts of me, I was neither so simple nor so foolish as to think of them. I might have said, like Atys, and with more sincerity:

"J'aime les roses nouvelles:
J'aime a les voir s'embellir:
Sans leurs epines cruelles,
J'aimerois a les cueillir."[1]

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[1] "I like the new-blown roses; I like, too, to see them unfolding; were it not for their cruel thorns, I should like to pluck them."

What charmed me in them was the graces of their mind, the activity of their imagination, the easy and natural current of their ideas and language, and a certain delicacy of thought and feeling, which, like that of their physiognomy, seems peculiar to their sex. Their conversations formed a school, equally useful and agreeable; and I availed myself, as much as possible, of their lessons. The man who aims only at writing with precision, energy and vigour, may confine himself to the society of men; but he who wishes his style to possess pliancy, amenity, smoothness, and a certain nameless indescribable charm, will do well, I think, to live with women. When I read that Pericles sacrificed every morning to the Graces, I understand by that that Pericles every day breakfasted with Aspasia.

Nevertheless, however interesting as a source of mental improvement I found the society of these agreeable women, it did not prevent me from strengthening and exalting my soul, from opening and enriching my ideas in a society of men whose minds gave warmth and light to my own. The house of the Baron d'Holbach, and for some time past that of Helvetius, formed a rendezvous for this society, which consisted partly of the flower of Madame Geoffrin's guests, and partly of some heads which had appeared to Madame Geoffrin too bold and too hazardous to be admitted to her dinners. She esteemed the Baron d'Holbach, she loved Diderot, but clandestinely, and without committing herself on their account. It is true she had admitted, and, as it were, adopted Helvetius; but that was during his youth, and before he had committed his follies.

I never could understand why d'Alembert kept himself at a distance from the society of which I am speaking. He and Diderot, associates in the labour and glory attached to the enterprise of the "Encyclopædia," had at first been extremely intimate; but they were so no longer; they spoke of each other with much esteem, but they did not live together, and scarcely ever met. I never dared to ask the reason.

Jean Jacques Rousseau and Buffon belonged for some time to this philosophical society. But the one made an open rupture with it; the other, with more moderation and address, withdrew, and kept himself aloof. I think I understand perfectly the system on which they both acted.

Buffon, by means of the Royal cabinet, and his "Natural History," found himself in possession of a considerable income. He saw that the "Encyclopædia" school was out of favour at Court, and with the King; he dreaded being involved in the general wreck; and that he might either continue his voyage with swelling sails, or at least might steer prudently among the rocks, he was better pleased to have a free and separate vessel to himself. We took no offence at this conduct. But there was yet another cause for his retreat.

Buffon, surrounded at home with flatterers and humble attendants, meeting usually with an obsequious deference to his systematical fancies, was sometimes disagreeably surprised to find himself regarded by us with less docility and reverence. I often saw him go away dissatisfied with the opposition he had met with. His merit was undoubted; but his pride and presumption were at least equal to it. Spoiled by adulation and ranked by the multitude among our great men, he was fretted to see that the mathematicians, the chemists, the astronomers, allowed him but a very inferior rank among them; that naturalists themselves were little disposed to place him at their head; and that, among men of letters, he obtained only the scanty praise of an elegant writer and a great painter of Nature. Some even reproached him with having written pompously on a subject which required only an easy and natural style. I remember when one of his female friends asked me how I would speak of him if I were to write his funeral oration for the French

Academy. I answered that I would give him a distinguished rank among our descriptive poets—a species of praise with which she was not at all satisfied.

Buffon, therefore, finding himself uncomfortable with his equals, shut himself up at home with ignorant and servile companions. He never went to either of the Academies; but studied a part to advance his fortune with the ministry, and his reputation in foreign Courts, from whom he received handsome presents in exchange for his works. His silent pride, however, did no harm at least to anybody. It was otherwise with that of Rousseau.

In consequence of the success which his two works, crowned at Dijon, had met with among the inexperienced, Rousseau, foreseeing that paradoxes, embellished and animated by the eloquence of his style, would readily draw after him a crowd of enthusiasts, conceived the ambition of becoming the head of a sect; and, instead of being a mere member of the philosophical school, he wished to be chief and sole professor in a school of his own; but, by retiring from our society, like Buffon, without quarrel or uproar, he would not have attained his object. In hopes of drawing the attention of the multitude, he had endeavoured to assume the appearance of an ancient philosopher; and having dressed himself, first in an old great-coat, and then in an Armenian habit, he appeared in this attire at the opera, in the coffee-houses, in the public walks; but neither his dirty little periwig, and staff of Diogenes, nor his fur cap, drew the eyes of the passengers. A bold stroke was necessary to warn the enemies of literary men, and particularly of those who were stigmatised by the name of philosophers, that J. J. Rousseau was divorced from them. This rupture would gain him a crowd of partisans, and he had fully reckoned upon the priests being of the number. It was not enough, therefore, to separate from Diderot and his friends, unless he also abused them; and by throwing a dart of calumny against Diderot, he gave the signal of that war which, at his departure, he wished to commence.

Their society, however, comforted themselves under this loss; and, little affected by the ingratitude on which Rousseau seemed to value himself, found within themselves the most agreeable enjoyments which can be afforded by freedom of thought and the intercourse of minds. We were no longer kept in leading strings, as we had been by Madame Geoffrin. But this liberty did not degenerate into licentiousness; there were still revered and inviolable subjects, on which a difference of opinion was never indulged. God, virtue, the holy laws of natural morality, were never, in my presence at least, subjected to a doubt: this is what I can attest. A very wide career was still left; and the flight which men's minds took, made me sometimes think I heard the disciples of Pythagoras or Plato. There it was that Galiani sometimes astonished us by the originality of his ideas, and by the elegant, curious and unforeseen manner in which he unfolded them; there it was that the chemist Roux revealed to us, like a man of genius, the mysteries of Nature; there it was that the Baron d'Holbach, whose reading was universal, and who never forgot anything interesting, poured out abundantly the stores of his memory; there, in particular, it was that Diderot, with his mild and persuasive eloquence, and his countenance sparkling with the fire of inspiration, diffused light through every mind and warmth through every heart. He who knows Diderot only by his writings, does not know him at all. His systematic ideas upon the art of writing spoiled the beauty of his natural genius. But in the course of conversation he warmed, and, allowing the abundance of his thoughts to flow without restraint, forgot his theories, and yielded to the impulse of the moment; then it was that he was transporting. In his writings he never could form a regular whole; that primary operation which arranges and puts everything in its proper place, was too tedious and too painful for him. He wrote what occurred at the moment, without any previous meditation; so that, as he said himself, he has composed fine pages, but never written a book. Now this want of connection disappeared in the free and varied current of conversation. One of Diderot's finest moments was when an author consulted him upon his work. If the subject deserved the trouble, you might see him seize, penetrate, and at a glance discover all the excellence and beauty of which it was susceptible. If he perceived that the author did not execute his design well; then, instead of listening to the reading, he supplied from his own mind the defects of the author. Was it a play, he threw in new scenes, new incidents and strokes of character, and, thinking he had heard what his fancy suggested, he gave us a magnificent account of the work that had been read to him; in which, when it appeared, we found scarcely anything of what he had quoted. Generally speaking, the whole of every branch of human knowledge was so familiar and so full in his mind, that he seemed always prepared for what was to be said; and his most instantaneous glimpses seemed the result of recent study or of long meditation. This man, besides being one of the most enlightened of the age, was also one of the most engaging; and when he spoke from the fulness of his heart upon any subject connected with moral goodness, I cannot express the charm which he gave to the eloquence of feeling. His whole soul was in his eyes and on his lips. Never was a countenance more expressive of goodness of heart.

I do not mention such of our friends as you have seen under the eye of Madame Geoffrin and subjected to her discipline. At the houses of the Baron d'Holbach, and of Helvetius, they were at their ease, and on that account the more agreeable; for the mind must be free from restraint before it can display its vigour and grace; in this respect, it resembles the courser of Virgil:

> "Qualis ubi abruptis fugit præsepia vinclis,
> Tandem liber, equus, campoque potitus aperto
> Emicat, arrectisque fremit cervicibus alte
> Luxurians."[1]

You may conceive how agreeable excellent dinners, twice or thrice a week, must have been in such good company. We all enjoyed it so much that, when the fine weather came, we sometimes exchanged these dinners for philosophical walks to the vicinity of Paris and along the banks of the Seine; for the repast on these days was a large dinner of fish, and we went by turns to the places most celebrated for the supply of that article. It was commonly to St. Cloud; we went down early in a boat, breathing the air of the river, and we returned in the evening across the wood of Boulogne. You may well suppose that the conversation in these walks seldom languished.

Happening once to be a few minutes alone with Diderot, and talking of the "Letter to d'Alembert on Public Places," I expressed my indignation at the note which Rousseau had inserted in the preface to that letter; it was like the wound of a dagger with which he had struck Diderot. The text is as follows:

"I had a severe and judicious Aristarchus; I neither have nor desire him any more; and my heart stands in need of him still more than my writings."

The following is the note which he had added to the text:

"If you have drawn your sword against your friend, do not despair; for there are means of being reconciled to your friend. If you have grieved him by your words,

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[1] "As when a courser, having broken his fastenings, escapes from his stall, free at last, and, having gained the open plain, darts forth, and neighs with head aloft, exulting in his liberty."

fear nothing; it is still possible to be reconciled to him. But for abuse, injurious reproof, the revealing of a secret, and the wound made in his heart by treachery, there is no pardon in his eyes; he will depart to return no more."
—*Ecclesiast.* xxii., 26, 27.

Everyone knew that this defamatory note was addressed to Diderot; and many believed he merited it, since he made no attempt to refute it.

"Never," said I, "can my opinion waver between you and Rousseau; I know you, and I think I know him also. But tell me what can have thrown him into such a fury, and what pretence he can have for so cruel an outrage?" "Let us withdraw," said he, "into this solitary alley; there I will entrust you with a secret, which I lodge only in the bosom of my friends."

NOTES TO VOL. I

NOTE 1, p. 8.

THE course of study in the French colleges is divided into three parts: Humanity, Rhetoric, Philosophy.

The Humanity classes continue for about six years, and are spent in learning Latin, with a slight tincture of Greek at the end.

The Rhetoric classes continue for two years. Here the students, for the first time, begin to compose; for, till then, they have only translated. A thought is given them which they are to extend and enlarge, to express in rounded and lengthened periods. This exercise is called an Amplification. At length they come to formal discourses, almost all in the Latin language.

The next class is that of Philosophy, which begins with a compendium, or a multitude of questions about the existence of philosophy, the philosophy of Adam, &c. From thence, they go on to Logic; that which is taught, at least, in a great number of colleges, is said to be nearly as follows: To conceive well by means of universals, to judge well by means of categories, and to construct a syllogism by means of the figures, "Barbara, celarem, darii." It is asked if logic be an art or a science; if the conclusion belong to the essence of syllogism, &c. Metaphysics is conducted in nearly the same manner.

NOTE 2, p. 98.

THE following particulars respecting this amiable man are given by Marmontel in the preface to one of his tragedies.

"He was a native of Provence, and of a family distinguished by its nobility. He embraced at first the profession of arms, and served for some years as a captain in the King's regiment. The officers of this corps, who were fortunately capable of estimating his singular merit, had conceived such a tender veneration for him, that I have heard some of them call him by the respectable name of father.

"The fatigues of the war in Bohemia had deranged the health of M. de Vauvenargue to such a degree, as to render him incapable of serving. Zeal for his country's welfare then directed his views towards diplomacy. The habit of constant study and deep reflection, joined to the prodigious extent of his capacity, soon qualified him to offer his services to the ministry. They were accepted, and, in the interval previous to his being employed, he withdrew into the bosom of his family, where he could devote himself, at more leisure, to the new kind of study upon which he had entered. There it was that the small-pox reduced him to a state of complete infirmity. Disfigured by the marks which it had left, seized with that chest complaint which brought him to the tomb, and almost deprived of sight, he found himself under the necessity of declining, with thanks, the good intentions of the ministry. But, in the midst of bodily suffering, he could not renounce the desire of being useful to mankind. His last years were employed in the study of philosophy, that is to say, of the soul. His book, entitled, 'Introduction to the Knowledge of the Human Mind,' was the fruit of this study; a precious monument, which may be called the triumph of reason, of genius and of virtue. Here we see that no man deserved better than himself that panegyric which he pronounces on M. de Fénélon:

"'What sincerity, what goodness of heart, do we discover in thy writings! What splendour of imagery and language! Who ever embellished with so many flowers a style so natural, so melodious and so tender? By whom was reason ever adorned with so attractive a dress? Ah! what ample treasures were to be found in thy rich simplicity!'

"A small number of friends formed the only consolation of his sufferings. He knew the world, and did not despise it. The friend of mankind, he considered vice as a misfortune; pity, in his heart, supplied the place of indignation and hatred. Never did art or intrigue possess such empire over men's minds as he derived from the goodness of his character, the mildness of his eloquence. He was always in the right, and yet no one felt himself humbled by it. The affability of the friend made us love in him the superiority of the master.

"Mild, feeling, and compassionate, he had full command over our hearts. An unalterable serenity withdrew his sorrows from the eyes of friendship. His example was sufficient to teach us how to support adversity; and the man who witnessed his equanimity dared not be unhappy in his presence. The nearer he saw himself to his end, the more anxious he felt to employ usefully the hours that were flying away. The last moments of his life were employed in putting the finishing hand to his book, and he died with that constancy and those sentiments which became a Christian philosopher, in the bosom of peace and in the arms of his friends."

NOTE 3, p. 112.

As the plays of our author are not generally read in this country, a short analysis of their contents may be necessary, in order that the narrative may be properly understood. The following is an outline of the plot of *Dionysius*.

Dionysius the elder is represented (still more than in the history) as a severe and inhuman tyrant. Dion, though decidedly hostile to his system of conduct, continues still to serve him in hopes of his amendment. Dionysius the younger is represented as in the highest degree amiable and accomplished; in short, as the model of a perfect prince, and, that a tender passion may not be wanting, he is distractedly in love with the fair Aretia, the daughter of Dion, who returns his affection. Their prospects of happiness, however, are unexpectedly disappointed by the tyrant's determining to marry her himself. Aretia, on first hearing of this proposal, is struck with horror, but soon determines to sacrifice her passion to the welfare of her country. She, therefore, offers to become the wife of Dionysius, on condition of his changing his conduct and consulting only the good of his people. Dionysius, beyond expectation, offers to resign his crown, provided she can procure the consent of his son to assume the reins of government. Aretia has then an interview with her lover, and by the influence of the same motives which had weighed with herself, at length prevails upon him to accept the crown and renounce her. Immediately on learning this resolution, Dionysius, who had made the proposal only with a treacherous intention, orders his son to be thrown into chains.

Among the motives which Aretia had employed to induce her lover to accept the offer of the crown, she had intimated that a conspiracy was on foot against his father, which would be fatal to him if he continued to reign. He now thinks it his duty to inform his father of the danger to which he is exposed; but, in order to make a compromise with love and friendship, he refuses to name the authors. The tyrant, not satisfied, threatens him with torture and death, unless he will make the full discovery; and, finding these threats vain, he sends Aretia to him with the view of extorting the secret. While they are conversing together, a friend of Dion enters and informs them that the plot is brought to maturity, and on the point of being executed. Dionysius not only indignantly rejects the proposal of conspiring against his father, but orders Aretia to remain as a hostage, and as a security for Dion's fidelity. This is that part of the fourth act which caused such alarm to our author's critics, but which met with such brilliant success. Meanwhile, the tyrant discovers the secret of the conspiracy, upon which he calls upon Aretia to marry him immediately as the only condition on which her friends can expect pardon. Aretia consents, but procures poison mingled in the cup which they were to drink at the ceremony, and thus puts an end both to his life and her own. The tyrant then rushes upon the stage, eager that, before dying, he may avenge himself of his son, whom he considers as the guilty person. He then cries out—

> "Vous, qu'en ces lieux mon fils soit amené.
> O vengeance! O fureur! je suis empoisonné.
> Je reconnois mon fils. Sa main desesperée
> M'a fait boire la mort dans la coupe sacrée.
> Sous quel voile imposteur marchoit sa cruauté
> Monstre, digne de moi, tu m'as trop imité.
> Toi qu'il a fait couler dans mes veines brulantes,
> Poison, rends, s'il se peut, tes atteintes plus lentes.
> Mon supplice m'est doux, s'il peut se prolonger.
> O mort! affreuse mort! laisse-moi me venger."

—but he dies before he is able to gratify his vengeance.

The style of this play is remarkably different from that mild and tender character which breathes in his tales. The powers which it displays, though not of the first order, are considerable; but appear only in passages expressive of force and energy, with a mixture of horror.

Note 4, p. 144.

The plot of the tragedy of *Aristomenes* is as follows: Aristomenes, the defender of the liberty of Messene, and the darling of the army and people, is regarded with a jealous eye by a numerous party in the senate, and plots are even formed to destroy him. His wife, Leonide, on being informed of the dangers to which he is exposed, is sensible that the only means of safety will be a war with Lacedemon, which may render his services necessary. She forms, therefore, the extraordinary resolution of going to Sparta and giving such information as she imagines will induce the city to commence hostilities against Messene. She, at the same time, offers herself and her son as hostages for the truth of this report. The Spartans generously send them both back; but, on their arrival, Aristomenes, ignorant of his wife's real motives, is the first to order them to be thrown into prison. Leonide, however, procures an interview with her husband, and defends herself in the following speech, which forms rather a favourable specimen of the author's poetry:

"A l'interet public par les loix asservee,
Je lui sacrifirois, et ma gloire, et ma vie
Mais pour toi je suis prête a te sacrifier
Ma gloire, mon pays, mon sang, le monde entier.
Que m'importe Messene, et le monde, et moi même,
Quand mon cour eperdu tremble pour ce qu'il aime?
Je ne connois que toi, je ne vis que pour toi.
Le cœur de mon epoux est l'univers pour moi.
Sans doute un tel aveu te revolte, t'étonne:
Tout cede dans ton cœur quand la patrie ordonne:
Le mien d'aucun remords ne se sent combattu.
Je t'adore, voila ma premiere vertu,
Ma gloire, mon devoir, ma loi la plus austere,
Le plus beau, le plus saint, des nœuds que je revere.
Oui j'aime mieux mourir coupable aux yeux de tous
Pour avoir immolé Messene a mon epoux;
Que de vivre adorée en heroine, en reine,
Pour avoir immolé mon epoux à Messene."

Aristomenes declares himself unable to blame this excess of love, but is under the necessity of leaving his wife and daughter in the hands of justice. Their trial accordingly comes on, and, notwithstanding the speech of Leonide (which, by-the-bye, is not quite so eloquent as, from what is here said, we should be led to suppose), they are both condemned to die. Upon the arrival of this afflicting intelligence, Aristomenes is urged by his friends to avail himself of his influence over the army, and to punish those persons who could deliver so criminal a sentence. But he steadily resists this proposal, urging that if the soldiery were once let loose, they would not be satisfied without the entire destruction of Messene. Then, says he:

> "Lieux où je vis le jour, palais de nos aieux
> Temple de la justice, asyle de nos dieux,
> Remparts, d'ou j'ecartai l'esclavage et la guerre,
> Vous aurez, pour moi seul, disparu de la terre."

As a mitigation of the sentence, the senate then decree that it shall be executed on one only, leaving to Aristomenes the choice of which that should be. They are then introduced, each earnestly petitioning him to fix upon themselves. Aristomenes exclaims loudly against this inhuman alternative; but while he is yet unable to determine, one of his friends comes and relates that he had stabbed, in full senate, the two ringleaders of the opposite party; that a complete change had then been produced in the minds both of senate and people; that the sentence had been reversed; and that all parties were now loud in praise of Aristomenes.

Marmontel's two other plays are—

1.—*The Heraclides.* The plot of this tragedy is as follows: Deianira and Olimpia, the wife and daughter of Hercules, arrive at Athens to save themselves from the persecution of Euristheus, King of Argos, the mortal enemy of the offspring of that hero. Euristheus invades Attica with a large army, and sends Copreus to demand that the fugitives should be delivered up to him. Demophoon, King of Athens, rejects the demand, urged particularly by his son, Sthenelus, who is in love with Olimpia. Meantime, an oracle pronounces that, in order to ensure victory, a female of illustrious descent must be sacrificed to Ceres; and as the King cannot dispose of the life of his subjects, it seems necessary that one of the posterity of Hercules should perish. A contest then arises between the mother and daughter, which should be the victim. The urgency of each to sacrifice herself for the other, gives rise to the chief interest of the play. At length, Sthenelus discovers that the soothsayer who had delivered the oracle was an impostor, who acted in concert with Euristheus; defeats the enemy and marries Olimpia.

2.—*Cleopatra.* In this tragedy Cleopatra is drawn in colours very different from those in which we are accustomed to view her—as virtuous as she was beautiful, and unfortunate only in being loved with too much fondness. The author even asserts that he has historical proofs of this being her real character, which he published a few days previous to the representation; but found it impossible, in so short a time, to destroy the impression of two thousand years. The catastrophe turns upon a letter, containing overtures of love, which she writes to Cæsar, but only with the view of ensnaring him. Cæsar, however, shows this letter to Antony, who, in despair at her infidelity, kills himself; on learning which, Cleopatra follows his example.

NOTE 5, p. 156, 254, 255.

MARIVAUX.—This writer, like Marmontel, though chiefly known among us as a writer of novels, was in France first raised to notice by his dramatic performances. At the age of eighteen, being in a company where the talent of writing comedy was extolled in what he thought an extravagant manner, he ventured to say that it did not appear to him so difficult a matter. The company laughed, and bade him try it. Accordingly, in a day or two he brought a long comedy, written in verse. But though this seems to have given him a decided bent towards the drama, he did not publish it, but continued long to improve his powers in silence. Nor did he appear as a dramatic writer till the age of thirty. His first appearance in that character was in a tragedy called the *Death of Annibal.* But, though he drew well the character of that hero, the piece is said to have wanted colouring and animation. He found that his powers did not lie that way; and from that time devoted himself to comedy. He wrote a number of pieces of this description, yet all so like each other, that his critics alleged he never wrote more than one. They were all founded on what was called a "surprise of love"—that is, on two persons who are in love without knowing it, and never make the discovery till the end of the play. But the refined and studied wit which he was ambitious of displaying, did not at all accord with the simplicity which was to be expected from a plot of this kind. His romances, which are well known in this country, possess more nature and variety.

His conversation was similar to his writings. At first, it amused by its singularity; but soon became fatiguing by its metaphysical monotony and too studied expressions. It was agreeable to be sometimes in his company, but to be often so was tiresome. He was too polite not to appear attentive in company, but he attended less to what was said than to what he thought might be said on any subject. For this reason, all companies were nearly alike to him; nay, he is even said to have preferred that of fools, as leaving most scope for the exercise of this kind of ingenuity; perhaps, also, from the homage which they were disposed to pay him in return for the unusual attention with which they found themselves honoured.

Though there was so much study in his own manner, there was nothing he detested so much in others. He had received from a friend a number of letters very much in his own style, which had pleased him greatly; but one day when he called upon him, happening to see on his table scrolls of these letters, he ran off, declaring that he would have nothing more to do with him—and kept his word. He was once in love with a young lady, and was on the point of paying his addresses to her; but, happening to enter unexpectedly, he found her studying attitudes before a mirror, which instantly extinguished his passion.

He was rather too much disposed to take offence at speeches made in his company, of which Marmontel gives afterwards a striking instance. A friend of his, who was surprised at the coldness with which he had repeatedly behaved to him, at length became urgent to know the reason. "A year ago," replied Marivaux, "you whispered, in my presence, into somebody's ear; now, if it had been anything good you were saying, you would not have whispered it." His character, however, was highly honourable and beneficent; this last virtue he carried to an excess that was hurtful to himself. An anecdote is told of a beggar, who, having applied to him for alms, was chid by Marivaux on the ground of being able to work. "Oh, sir," says the claimant, "if you only knew how lazy I am!" Marivaux was so much amused with this singular apology that he immediately granted his petition. He died on the 11th of February, 1763, at the age of seventy-five.

Mairan.—A man highly distinguished for his proficiency in natural philosophy. He was born of a noble family, at Beziers, in 1678. He succeeded Fontenelle as perpetual secretary to the French Academy, and was thought almost to have filled his place. He possessed much of the same talent of placing abstract subjects in a luminous point of view. He held this office, however, only till 1744. All his works are on subjects of natural philosophy, except the eulogies on members of the Academy, which he pronounced while exercising the functions of its secretary. His manners are said to have been extremely mild and engaging. He died in 1771, at the age of ninety-three.

Astruc.—A physician of the first eminence. He received his degree from the University of Montpelier, and practised for some time in that city; but the reputation of his skill induced Louis XV. to call him to Paris, and place him in the number of his consulting physicians. He was also appointed a professor in the Royal College. He was some time first physician to Augustus II., King of Poland; but finding that the ceremonial of that Court imposed too great a restraint upon him, he returned to Paris, and died there, in 1766, at the age of eighty-three.

Note 6, p. 168.

Vaucanson.—A mechanic of the greatest celebrity. He was born at Grenoble, in 1709. Happening, while yet a child, to be shut up in a room where there was a clock, he examined it, and soon found out its mechanism. From that time he began to employ himself in the construction of machines. In 1738 he came to Paris with an automaton of his own framing, which could play ten airs on the flute. In consequence of this invention, his reputation soon spread; besides the favour of the public, he received marked testimonies of approbation from the Academy of Sciences, and was admitted a member of that learned body. Besides a variety of other ingenious automatons, he contrived new machinery in the silk manufacture, with the inspection of which he was entrusted by Fleury. Marmontel's account of his stupidity with regard to everything which did not concern his art, is generally confirmed. "Vaucanson," says M. d'Israeli, "was as much a machine as any he made." He died on the 21st of November, 1782.

NOTE 7, p. 171.

BERNIS, The Abbé de.—A well-known character, who, by his amatory poems, and by his address in paying court to the great, raised himself, first to the rank of ambassador, and afterwards to that of minister for foreign affairs in France. Marmontel gives a history of his elevation in the second volume of these Memoirs.

DUCLOS.—A man of considerable literary merit, and who long held the office of secretary to the French Academy. He was born at Dinant, in Brittany, in the year 1705. His father was a hat-maker. He was educated at Paris, and soon distinguished himself by his proficiency in literature. His best work was on the "Manners of the Age," somewhat in the style of La Bruyere, but he was not thought to have the same depth and energy. He wrote also some novels, which display knowledge of the world. Being appointed historiographer of France, he wrote, "Secret Memoirs of the Reigns of Louis XIV. and Louis XV." He passed slightly over many of the facts, as being generally known at the time; but the narrative is rendered valuable by judicious reflections, and by his skill in drawing characters. His own was frank, honest and somewhat blunt. He used to say, "Such a man is a fool; I make the assertion, and he proves it." Though attached originally to what was called the philosophical party, he was much disgusted with the excesses of some of its partisans, and used to say, "They will never rest until they have made me a devotee." He appears to have succeeded in his wish of acquiring consideration in his native province; for the states of Brittany having, in reward of services which they had rendered, been desired to name persons whom they judged worthy of royal favour, Duclos was unanimously named; and he was, in consequence, ennobled. He died on the 26th of March, 1772. Marmontel succeeded to both his offices; to that of historiographer immediately, and to the other after a short interval.

NOTE 8, p. 180.

TENCIN, Madame de.—A French lady of great celebrity. She entered, early in life, into a convent, but soon tiring of that mode of life, found means to escape from it, and came to Paris. She there contrived to insinuate herself into the first political circles, and acquired considerable influence, particularly through Cardinal Dubois, with whom she was intimately connected.

She went deep into the System of Law, and improved her fortune by it. Her object was now to obtain a brief from the Court of Rome, sanctioning her departure from the cloister. She procured it through the interest of Fontenelle; but, on account of some error in point of form, it was not published. However, she went on in the same round of gaiety and intrigue. She kept at her house a rendezvous of literary men, of whom Marmontel has given some account. They were thought to proceed on too exclusive a system, and to have adopted the maxim, "No one shall have wit, except us and our friends." However, they certainly included the first names in French literature. Madame de Tencin died in 1749, at an advanced age. She was the authoress of several popular romances, the "Siege of Calais," the "Count de Comminge," &c.

Note 9, p. 223.

The famous attempt made by **Damiens.**—As the King was stepping into his carriage, to go from Versailles to Trianon, this ruffian mixed with his guards and contrived to give him a wound with a dagger in the side, immediately under the fifth rib. It merely grazed the skin, however, and scarcely drew blood. As the day was cold, and everyone wore cloaks, Damiens concealed the dagger under his, and had nearly escaped; but was betrayed by omitting to take off his hat along with the rest.

Note 10, p. 226.

Bernis.—Most of the particulars of the rise of this personage are given by Marmontel. Soon after the period at which his concludes, Bernis happened to displease Madame de Pompadour, in consequence of which he was dismissed in disgrace. In 1764, however, he was recalled, appointed Archbishop of Albi, and sent as ambassador to Rome. There he lived in great splendour till the period of the French Revolution, by which he lost his whole fortune, amounting to upwards of £20,000 a year, and was reduced to great poverty. A few years before his death, however, he received a handsome pension from the King of Spain. He died at Rome on the 1st November, 1794. His chief poems are, an "Address to Idleness," the "Four Seasons," and one upon "Religion."

Bernard was the son of a sculptor at Grenoble, in the province of Dauphiny. He studied at the college of the Jesuits at Lyons, and some attempts were made by these fathers to attach him to their body; but his inclinations led him to a different mode of life. He came to Paris with the view of displaying his poetical talents. His poverty obliged him for some time to serve as clerk to a notary; but some little poems which he wrote drew him into notice. The Marquis de Pezay took him with him into Italy in 1734, where he was present at several battles, and is said to have behaved better than poets usually do upon these occasions. He was afterwards appointed to the office of Secrétaire-Générale des Dragons,[1] which was worth nearly a thousand a year. He then returned to Paris, where his society was much sought after. The neat, pretty turn of his poetry, without warmth or energy, made Voltaire give him the appellation of *gentil*, which always adhered to him. In 1771 he was seized with a fit of apoplexy, which reduced him to a state of complete mental imbecility. After this, being present at a repetition of his opera of *Castor*, he is said to have called out, during the whole time of the representation, "Is the King come? is he pleased? is Madame de Pompadour pleased?" an exhibition strongly characteristic of the dotage of a poetical courtier. He died on the 1st November, 1775.

Note 11, p. 236.

Boissy.—A French comic writer of some eminence. He was born at Vic, in Auvergne, on the 26th of November, 1694. After wearing for some time the dress of an abbé, he came to Paris, and wrote a tragedy, which was hissed. He then tried his powers in comedy, in which he was more successful. He married; and having to depend entirely for support on his theatrical productions, was reduced to extreme pecuniary embarrassments. This obliged him not only to write too much, but also to employ his labour on the writings of others, whose comedies, written in prose, he versified, and is said to have often succeeded better for them than for himself. He began by personal satire, but soon renounced that odious mode of subsistence. Afraid of the contempt which poverty meets with in the world, he dressed in the most elegant manner, even while his wife and himself were in danger of starving. After obtaining the patent of the *Mercury*, he is said to have indulged in an excess of luxury, like a man who, after long fasting, receives a supply of food. He is also said, however, to have conducted it well, and to have improved its arrangement. He died soon after obtaining the patent, on which occasion he is said to have lamented that his life was not either shorter, that he might have escaped the distresses of extreme poverty; or longer, so as to have enabled him to enjoy the opulence at which he at last arrived. His dramatic works have been published in nine volumes octavo.

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[1] Secretary-General of Dragoons.

NOTE 12, p. 240.

SUARD.—This ingenious gentleman, who is still alive,[1] is well known in this country as the translator of Dr. Robertson's "History of Charles V.," which was executed with such ability as to secure his reception into the French Academy. He has recently been appointed one of the secretaries to the National Institute.

NOTE 13, p. 244.

MALFILATRE was born at Saint-Jean-de-Caen, on the 8th October, 1732. He was rescued from the poverty which is usually the attendant on the Muses, by the Marquis de Lauraguais, in consequence of that nobleman's admiration for his poem entitled, "Narcisse dans l'isle de Venus." He wrote a number of little pieces in different periodical works, which are said to have given a great promise of future excellence. He had begun to turn "Telemachus" into verse, and had made a prose translation, with notes, of the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid. Unhappily, however, he died in 1767, at the age of thirty-five.

NOTE 14, p. 244.

THOMAS.—Antoine Thomas was born in the diocese of Clermont, and held, for some time, the place of professor in the college of Beauvais. But his merit soon called him to Paris, where he made the most distinguished figure, and was equally esteemed for virtue and talents. He is frequently mentioned, and the principal events of his life recorded, in the course of these Memoirs, which it would be improper now to anticipate. The following account of his daily habits, however, which is given by a French writer, Herault de Sechelles, will be found interesting :

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[1] 1808.

"Thomas," says he, "was accustomed, when well, to compose in bed till seven or eight in the morning; he then rose and continued the same employment, walking. He afterwards returned to bed, took off his shoes, sat down with his legs crossed, like Malebranche, and remained thus concentrated within himself till the hour of dinner. During this time he could not endure a person to be in his room; he even felt some degree of constraint if there was anyone in that next to him. On the days that the Academy met, he went, after its meetings, to Madame Necker's, with whom he spent two hours every day, when she was alone. He was extremely attached to her; yet he sometimes reproached himself on account of the time he spent in her company, and said that if this acquaintance had to be made anew, he would not make it. On his return he had some work read to him, but it was seldom or never a new work. In the country he frequently composed in the open air. Often was he met in the alleys of Chantilly and of Marly, seated, with his back resting against a hedge, composing in a low voice, with his head bent forward, a pinch of snuff in his hand, which he was constantly putting to his nose without perceiving it to be always the same. When anyone came to tell him that dinner or supper was ready, he used to exclaim, 'Always dining, always supping, always going to bed; we pass in this way more than half our lives.'"

His works have produced singular effects. One young man, after having read the eulogy of "Duguay-Trouin," became a sailor, and distinguished himself in that profession. Another, after reading the eulogy of "Descartes," became a mathematician.

"Would you know," said he, "how to read with advantage? When you take a book, read first the title; then shut the book, and think how you would write upon the subject. Form in your mind a general division, which may embrace everything that can be said upon it; then take up the book and go to the table of contents. Fill up every chapter in your own mind. You will seek to compare yourself with the author. You will thus accustom your mind to great efforts, to extensive views. We must try our strength by fighting with giants, if we wish to grow, and to acquire new vigour. This exercise unfolds our powers, and gives them an unlooked-for energy." He quoted the custom of Crebillon, who whenever, in reading history, he met with a striking incident, laid down the book and formed in his mind the plan of a tragedy, founded upon the ideas which he had received from reading.

When Thomas heard anyone mentioned whom he regarded with contempt, he said, coldly, "I do not know him." He was sober, patient, mild, kind, compassionate, feeling in the extreme, yet never inflamed with passion; he treated his domestics with kindness, never uttering a word which could make them feel their situation. Many men of letters received considerable aid from him, and he studiously anticipated their wants. The following lines, written at the foot of his portrait, were considered as equally just and simple:

> "On ne sut en l'aimant ce qu'on cherit le plus
> De son ame ou de son genie:
> Par ses nobles talens il irrita l'envie,
> Et la soumit par ses vertus."[1]

NOTE 15, p. 244.

COLARDEAU was born in 1735, at Janville, in the province of Orleanois. He made himself known first by the translation of Pope's "Eloise to Abelard," which has been thought little inferior to the original. He wrote also an "Epistle of Armida to Rinaldo," in imitation of Tasso; but this did not meet with equal success. Nor was he more fortunate with his two tragedies of *Astarbe* and *Calista*, the latter of which is imitated from Rowe's *Fair Penitent*, but does not render the beauties of the original. He wrote, however, a number of other poems, which raised his reputation. He died at the age of forty-one, immediately after being appointed a member of the French Academy, and before he could pronounce the usual discourse at reception. This circumstance was rendered the more affecting from the extreme joy which he had displayed on receiving the news of his appointment, and which he had expressed in the warmest terms in a letter to the Academy. His character was mild and friendly. After engaging in a translation of Tasso's "Jerusalem," he learnt that Watelet had done the same; upon which he not only discontinued his own, but, when at the point of death, got up from bed to throw it into the fire. He is said to have had no perception of colours, and to have seen nothing in Nature but light and shade—a remarkable circumstance in a poet who possessed such powers of description. He died on the 7th April, 1776.

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[1] "In loving him, we knew not whether we most loved his character or his genius. By his great talents he provoked envy; he subdued her by his virtues."

LEMIERRE.—The author of several tragedies, which met only with moderate success. They contained striking passages and scenes; but his versification was harsh, and his subjects deficient in plan and arrangement. *Hypermnestra* and *The Widow of Malabar* were the two most successful. He wrote also a poem on painting, whose merits and defects are nearly the same with his tragedies. His character was mild and excellent. In his youth he furnished a memorable example of filial piety; living, himself, in the most frugal manner, that he might, every month, carry to his mother the scanty profits which his dramas afforded. He was born at Paris, where he died in 1793, at the age of seventy-two.

NOTE 16, p. 249.

CHARLES FRANÇOIS PANARD was born at Courville, near Chartres, in 1691. He obtained a little office in Paris, where he remained long unknown, till Le Grand, a celebrated actor, happening to see some of his pieces, discovered their merit, and drew him into notice. He wrote several comedies and *opéra-comiques*, besides a great variety of little poems. He excelled particularly in that species of song which the French call the *Vaudeville*. Marmontel, in his "Art of Poetry," calls him the "La Fontaine de Vaudeville." He describes himself in the following lines:

"Mon corps dont la structure a cinq pieds de hauteur,
Porte sous l'estomac une masse rotonde,
Qui de mes pas tardifs excuse la lenteur;
Peu vif dans l'entretien, craintif, distrait, reveur;
Aimant, sans m'asservir; jamais Brune ni Blonde
Peut étre pour mon bien, n'ont captivé mon cœur
Chansonnier, sans chanter, passable coupleteur,
Jamais dans mes chansons on n'a rien vu d'immonde.

* * * * * *

D'une indolence sans seconde
Paresseux, s'il en fut, et toujours endormi,
Du revenu qu'il faut je n'eus pas le demi,
Plus content toutefois que ceux où l'or abonde."[1]

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[1] "The structure of my body, which rises to the height of five feet, bears under the stomach a large round mass, which excuses the slowness of

He died of apoplexy at Paris, June 13th, 1765, at the age of seventy-four.

NOTE 17, p. 256.

CHASTELLUX.—François Jean, Marquis of Chastellux, was born of a distinguished family, which he rendered still more illustrious by his merit, both as an officer and a man of letters. His principal work is entitled, "De la Felicité Publique." His object is to draw a picture of the human race, and to examine in what age, in what country, and under what government, it would have been most desirable for man to exist. It was rather coldly received at first, but afterwards acquired a considerable reputation. It is even placed by Voltaire above the "Spirit of Laws." But this is far from being the general opinion; and Voltaire is here suspected of having wished to pay court to the author, who was supposed to have interest at Court, as Montesquieu was then dead. Chastellux served several years with distinction in America, and published a narrative of his travels in that country. It is an agreeable work, and full of information; but he is accused of having ridiculed too severely the Anglo-Americans, from whom he had met with the most friendly reception. He belonged to the French Academy, and to various other literary societies. He died at Paris on the 24th October, 1788.

NOTE 18, p. 256.

MORELLET.—A distinguished writer on political economy, with whom Marmontel afterwards became intimately connected by marrying a near relation of his. He is still alive,[1] and enjoys perfect health, though at a very advanced age.

NOTE 19, p. 256.

ST. LAMBERT was born and educated on a small estate which his father possessed in Lorraine. It happened to be in

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my tardy steps. I am little animated in conversation, timid, thoughtful; I love, without enslaving myself; never girl, either brown or fair (luckily, perhaps, for me) has subdued my heart. A songster, without singing; a tolerable couplet-maker, nothing indecent has stained my songs. . . . Of an indolence which nothing can equal, a sluggard if ever there was one; I had not half the income that I needed, yet was better satisfied than those who have gold in abundance."

[1] 1808.

the neighbourhood of the Marshal de Beauveau, with whom he became intimately acquainted, and contracted a friendship which lasted during life. St. Lambert discovered early a taste and capacity for literature; but wishing to add some professional pursuit, he fixed upon that of the army. He served, accordingly, for a long time and with distinction, both in the armies of Stanislaus and of the King of France; but, amid his military employments, never neglected literature and poetry. He spent some time at the Court of Luneville; he was then three years at Cirey, with Voltaire and Madame du Chatelet; and afterwards, coming to Paris, he was so much pleased with the society of that city as to fix his residence in it. His poem of the "Seasons" was universally admired; and a few years previous to his death he published an elaborate work, entitled "Principles of Morals among all Nations." He died on the 9th of February, 1803.

Note 20, p. 265.

Caylus, The Count de.—The personal coldness which subsisted between him and our author seems to have led the latter to undervalue the merit of this personage. He appears to have been a zealous and successful student of antiquities. In early life, he undertook a journey into Asia Minor, with the view of illustrating his favourite pursuits. Finding the roads rendered impassable by the robbers that frequented them, he devised a singular method of securing himself. Having thrown off everything which could tempt avarice, he entrusted himself to two of the most daring of these robbers, stipulating for a certain sum to be paid on his return. He found them most faithful guides; and by their assistance, discovered the ruins of Colophon. After his return to France he devoted himself entirely to the arts. On being received into the Academy of Sciences, he turned his attention chiefly to the illustration of classical antiquities. He published, in seven quarto volumes, a "Collection of Egyptian, Etruscan, Grecian, Roman and Gallic Antiquities." He invented the mode of fixing colours in marble, and made the discovery of encaustic painting. Our author accuses him of partiality in his patronage of artists. Certain it is, however, that to those whom he did patronise, he was most liberal. He died in 1765, at the age of ninety-three.

NOTE 21, p. 305.

POMPIGNAN.—Jean Jacques le Franc de Pompignan was born at Montauban, of a noble family. He was destined by his friends for the Bar, and held for some time the office of advocate-general, and afterwards that of first president of the "Cour des Aides," in his native city. His own inclination, however, rather inclined to poetry; and he produced, at the age of twenty-five, a tragedy called *Didon*, in which he imitates Racine, not altogether without success. Having increased his fortune by marriage, he removed to Paris in order to enjoy it. There, in 1760, he was admitted a member of the French Academy, upon which occasion he took the step which drew upon him the wrath of the philosophers and the ridicule of Voltaire, for which the stiff and pompous formality of his style seems to have afforded considerable scope. This, in a country where ridicule was omnipotent, obliged him to leave Paris. He lived, till 1784, at his château near Montauban, when he died at the age of seventy-five.

NOTE 22, p. 307.

FACETIES PARISIENNES.—These consist of a number of little pieces in prose and verse, where every sentence or stanza begins with the same particle. The following specimen of the *quand* may give an idea of the tone of satire which is here adopted:

"*When* a man has the honour to be received into a respectable society of men of letters, the harangue pronounced on his reception ought not to be a satire against literary men.

"*When*, by chance, a man is rich, he should not be so basely cruel as, in an academical oration, to reproach men of letters with their poverty, or proudly to say that they declaim against riches on account of the secret envy which they bear to the rich.

"*When* a man's works do no honour to his age, it is a strange piece of misconduct to decry that age.

"*When* one is scarcely a man of letters, and not at all a philosopher, it does not become him to say that our nation has only a false literature and a vain philosophy, &c."

Voltaire wrote a number of other pieces against the same person. He comments on a translation which Pompignan had made of Pope's "Universal Prayer," representing it as more deistical than anything published by those whom he attacked. He accuses him of unbounded vanity, of writing pompous panegyrics upon himself, &c.

NOTE 23, p. 332.

TOWARDS the end of the reign of Louis XV. an epidemic mortality, as it were, seemed to fall upon the royal family. The Duke of Burgundy, son to the Dauphin, died first. The Dauphin himself then fell into a lingering decline, wasted away without any apparent illness, and died. The Dauphiness, whether from contagion or from some other cause, was soon after affected in the very same manner, and survived her husband only fifteen months. A similar illness soon proved fatal to the wife of Stanislaus, King of Poland. It is remarkable that all those deaths had been preceded by that of Madame de Pompadour, accompanied by similar symptoms. This last circumstance tended strongly to throw discredit on the suspicions which were entertained of poison, since nobody was known who could be the common enemy of persons whose interests were so opposite.

NOTE 24, p. 346.

DUBOCAGE, Madame.—Celebrated as being the first lady who wrote an epic poem. She began with translating Milton's "Paradise Lost." She then wrote the "Columbiad, or the Discovery of America," a splendid subject, for which, however, her powers appeared to be scarcely adequate. She was highly honoured, however, by the first characters of the age. Voltaire lavished panegyrics upon her; and in a visit which she paid to Rome, the Pope, cardinals, and all the most distinguished families of that city vied with each other in the attentions which they paid to her. Perhaps, however, this homage might be given less to the excellence of her powers than to the singular direction in which they displayed themselves. She died at Paris in July, 1802, at a very advanced age.

NOTE 25, p. 347.

HENAULT.—Honorary President in the Court of Inquest, and a man of varied literary accomplishments. He published a "Chronological Abridgment of the History of France," in two quarto volumes. He wrote also some fugitive poems and little dramatic works. His manners are said to have been remarkably engaging; and the variety of his talents made him esteemed both in the learned and fashionable circles. He enjoyed particular favour with the Queen. He died in 1770, at the age of eighty-five.

NOTE 26, p. 347.

MONCRIF.—The author of a number of poems which were thought ingenious and delicate, particularly his poetical romances. He enjoyed for some time an office under the Count de Clermont, but was obliged to quit it through the machinations of some of his enemies, notwithstanding which, he continued to enjoy the Count's esteem. He was then appointed reader to the Queen, and enjoyed a high degree of favour with that Princess. He published an essay on the "Necessity and Means of Pleasing," which, though agreeably written, met with rather a cool reception. He was thought to attempt reducing into an art what was only the gift of Nature. However, it was allowed that he practised his own lessons. But his character suffered much more from an elaborate treatise which he published, entitled "The History of Cats." It was universally laughed at, and on his afterwards becoming a member of the French Academy, his enemies endeavoured to throw ridicule both on him and that learned body by representing it as his sole title to admission. His character was honourable and friendly. When M. d'Argenson was banished from Court in 1757, Moncrif requested permission to accompany his disgraced patron, but was allowed only to pay him an annual visit. He died at Paris in 1770, at the age of eighty-three.

END OF VOL. I

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